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ABSTRACT

The roles of 10 federal program officers responsible for monitoring the progress and quality of rural educational change projects funded by the Experimental Schools program were explored through questionnaires, interviews, observation, and site visits. Despite differences in background, opinions, and perceptions of the officers, all 10 had to carry out the difficult and simultaneous responsibilities of 3 roles: contract manager, project advisor, and technical assistant, which differed in terms of the officers' intensity of involvement, type of communication with the project, basis of authority, and scope of influence. Potential for conflict increased when the role components were inappropriately combined. Based on the priorities the officers gave to the three roles, personal performance styles emerged, differing by the degree of involvement in the school district and directiveness in dealing with local personnel. Although program officers felt helpful, their impact was contingent on many interrelated factors, such as project stage, persistence of the federal agency, continuity of federal policies and expectations, and community attitudes. A major question emerged as to the appropriateness and feasibility of the federal government's entering into active partnership with local governments to influence or control the planning and implementation of local projects through advisory or technical assistance roles. (SB)

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Patterns of Federal-Local Relationships in Education: A Case Study of the Experimental Schools Program

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Ronald G. Corwin

The information reported herein was prepared for the National Institute of Education's Division for the Dissemination and Improvement of Practice under contract no. 400-78-0034. This volume is one of a series of reports from the Longitudinal Study of Educational Change in Rural America under the direction of Dr. Robert E. Herriott of Abt Associates Inc.

PATTERNS OF FEDERAL LOCAL RELATIONSHIPS
IN EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY OF THE
RURAL EXPERIMENTAL SCHOOLS PROGRAM

Ronald G. Corwin

February 1977

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FOREWORD

One of the key actors in many relationships between the federal government and governments at the state and local levels is the federal "program officer"--the official charged with responsibility for implementing federal policy through the monitoring of grants and contracts. Unfortunately very little systematic knowledge exists about the role of incumbents of this important position or of the implications of their role behavior.

In the report which follows Professor Ronald G. Corwin has made an important contribution to our understanding of these roles and their implications. He has studied in great detail the role orientation and behavior of ten individuals who served as program officers for the Experimental Schools (ES) program of the National Institute of Education. His research has been conducted within the framework of the Evaluation and Documentation of the Experimental Schools Program for Small Schools Serving Rural Areas--a contract between the National Institute of Education (NIE) and Abt Associates Inc. (AAI) initiated in June 1972.

Although the original scope statement for AAI's research contract made no provision for a study of the funding agency itself, it quickly became apparent to members of the AAI research staff that the ES program officers were adopting an unusually active posture in their relations with the ten rural school districts. It was therefore thought likely that they would become an important part of any explanation of the success or failure of individual projects.

Our initial proposal to understand better this phenomenon called for defining Washington, D.C. as an "eleventh site" and locating there the same type of professionally-trained full-time participant observer as was then being assigned by AAI to each of the ten school districts. Although we persisted in making this recommendation we were unsuccessful in gaining its authorization.

However, in January 1975 we were able to gain authorization for a more limited research design which called for the retrospective interviewing of ES program officers and local project officials. We were most pleased

when Professor Corwin, a sociologist noted for his studies of educational roles and organizations, agreed to serve as the principal investigator for this special study. Professor Corwin's original proposal called for extensive interviewing both in Washington, D.C. and at each of the ten project sites. However, budgetary constraints necessitated that he limit his interviewing of local project officials to that which could be done by means of brief telephone calls. This was unfortunate, for it constrained greatly Professor Corwin's ability to obtain verified knowledge about program officer impact at the local project level. Nevertheless, the research provides some evidence on this question and makes an important contribution to our understanding of federal-local relations.

Beyond its obvious implications for how program officer roles are defined within the federal government, Professor Corwin's research has provided many insights into an important source of variation within the Experimental Schools program--the role behavior of its program officers. His findings will be particularly useful to members of the AAI research staff charged with responsibility for explaining variation in the success of these ten projects of planned educational change. For this we owe Professor Corwin a deep debt of gratitude.

Robert E. Herriott
Project Director

Cambridge, Massachusetts
January, 1977

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I wish to express my deep gratitude to Abt Associates Inc. (AAI) and especially to Robert E. Herriott and Michael B. Kane for their support and encouragement, and for the freedom given me in the design, implementation, and reporting of this study. Nancy Brigham served as the technical editor for this report and in that capacity was most helpful in improving its organization and clarity. I also wish to thank Norman Gold of the National Institute of Education (NIE) for his support throughout the study. Three other NIE officials, Robert Cunningham, Lynne Fender, and Russell Mullens reviewed an earlier draft of this report. Their criticisms and suggestions have been very helpful to me. The NIE program officers, AAI on-site researchers, and the local project officials whom I interviewed all were generous with their time, interest and help. Their candor has been invaluable. I sincerely hope that this study will be interesting and helpful to all concerned.

My views have been influenced and shaped by several other people representing a variety of perspectives who read early drafts of this manuscript, including associates who served with me when I was a program officer at the U.S. Office of Education, Daniel Griffiths (Dean of the School of Education at New York University), Terry Saario (Program Officer at the Ford Foundation), Randall B. Ripley (Chairman of the Department of Political Science at Ohio State University), and Michael W. Kirst (School of Education, Stanford University).

Ronald G. Corwin
Principal Investigator

Columbus, Ohio
January 1977

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Foreword	ii
Acknowledgements	iv
List of Figures and Tables	viii
CHAPTER ONE. . INTRODUCTION	1
Federal-Local Relationships	1
The Experimental Schools Program	3
Background for the Rural ES Program	3
The Aims of the Program	7
The Realities of the Program	7
The Nature of the Study	8
Design Limitations	9
Overview	11
Summary	11
Chapter Note	12
CHAPTER TWO. THE PROGRAM OFFICER: A THREE DIMENSIONAL PORTRAIT	13
The Program Officers' Background	14
Three Primary Roles	14
The Contract Manager Role	14
The Project Advisor Role	18
The Technical Assistance Role	21
Role Profiles	24
Type of Communication	24
Intensity of Involvement	24
Basis of Authority	26
Scope of Influence	26
Backgrounds Related to Roles and Opinions	27
Differences in Perceptions and Opinions	27
Relationship of Backgrounds to Roles	30
Summary	31
Chapter Notes	34

	<u>Page</u>
CHAPTER THREE. PERFORMANCE STYLES	35
Four Styles	35
The Uninvolved and Directive Style	35
The Involved and Directive Style	35
The Involved and Non-Directive Style	38
The Uninvolved and Non-Directive Style	39
Variations in the Use of Styles	40
The People Involved	40
The Program Officer's Expertise	41
Sophistication and Values of the Community	41
The Political Context	45
Economy, Congressional and Administrative Support	48
Type of Legal Relationship	49
Summary	50
CHAPTER FOUR. TYPES OF FEDERAL IMPACT: SOME SELECTED EXAMPLES	52
Views of Some Local Project Directors	53
Impact on Local Projects: Some Illustrations of Each Style	55
The Uninvolved and Directive Style	55
The Involved and Directive Style	57
The Involved and Non-Directive Style	58
The Uninvolved and Non-Directive Style	59
Failures of Influence Attempts	62
Rejections of Recommendations	62
Partial Implementation	63
Impact on Program Officers	63
Factors Related to the Amount of Impact	66
Project Stage	66
Federal Continuity and Persistence	68
Program Instability	69
Community Defenses	71
Community Vulnerability	72
Conditions Affecting Relationships with Local Projects:	
Some Patterns	74
Ability to be of Help	74
Technical Assistance	80

	<u>Page</u>
The Managerial Role	83
Advisory Roles	84
Summary	84
Chapter Notes	86
CHAPTER FIVE. CONCLUSIONS	87
Appropriateness of the Assistance Roles: The Positive Side	87
Appropriateness of the Assistance Roles: The Negative Side	90
Conditions Necessary for Federal Assistance	91
Project Stage	92
Administrative Continuity	93
Prior Experience of Federal Program Director	93
Administrative Support	94
Type of Legal Relationship	94
The Program Officers' Expertise	95
Sophistication and Expertise of the Local Community	96
The Parties in the Relationship	97
Summary	98
REFERENCES	100
APPENDIX A. Linear Correlation Matrix for Selected Variables	105
APPENDIX B. Program Officer Impact: A Synopsis of 133 Incidents	106
APPENDIX C. Responses of Program Officers to Selected Questionnaire Items, by Stage of Program	110
APPENDIX D. A Summary of Measures Used	114

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

	<u>Page</u>
 A. FIGURES	
FIGURE 1. Dimensions of the Experimental Schools Program	4
FIGURE 2. Types of System Linkage: Communication and Intensity of Involvement	25
FIGURE 3. Types of System Linkage: Scope of Influence and Basis of Authority	28
FIGURE 4. System Linkage Profiles	29
FIGURE 5. Performance Styles	36
FIGURE 6. An Explanation of Terms Used in Tables 1 and 2	77
 B. TABLES	
TABLE 1. Characteristics of the Three Local Projects Helped Most and the Three Helped Least by Program Officers	76
TABLE 2. Characteristics of the Three Local Projects Receiving the Most Technical Assistance (TA) and the Three Receiving the Least TA	82

CHAPTER ONE. INTRODUCTION

This report concerns the government employees who are largely responsible for monitoring the progress and quality of projects financed by federal agencies under contracts and grants to state and local agencies. These program officers, as we shall refer to them, are the federal administrators in direct contact with state and local governments, school districts, and other recipient institutions. Their responsibilities put them in a position to exercise a vital influence on the nature and quality of relationships that federal agencies establish with other levels of government.

FEDERAL-LOCAL RELATIONSHIPS

Despite a growing literature on the implementation of inter-governmental policy (Jones and Thomas, 1976; Smith, 1973) the role of the federal program officer has not been the subject of much serious analysis. Yet, it is commonly recognized that program implementation typically involves a substantial amount of "slippage" between the level at which decisions are made and the level at which they are applied. Clearly, much of the responsibility for interpreting decisions must be delegated to program officers, who as bureaucratic employees have the power to resist or distort policies according to their personal philosophies (Downs, 1967; Mechanic, 1962; Selznick, 1948; Van Horne and Van Meter, 1976). As communication links and mediators between the norms of the federal bureaucracy and the values of the community and institutions with which they work, they must play many different roles as programs evolve. In their direct and visible contact with the public, they are under severe pressures from various sources to compromise these norms (Bar-Josef and Schied, 1966; Katz and Danet, 1973).

All kinds of targeted federal programs intended to stimulate change and improve the quality of local services have multiplied in the past two decades (Bailey and Mosher, 1968; Reagan, 1972), and now account for one-fifth of local and state revenue. Reagan (1972) estimates that the federal share of domestic direct expenditures exceeds the share assumed by the states or the local levels of government. With specific reference to education, during the decade of the 1960s the federal share of expenditures increased from 4.4 to 7%. This amounts to about a two billion dollar increase, although

local expenditures increased even faster (by almost twelve billion dollars) (Kirst, 1973).

This increase in the federal role has revived the spectre of federal control that haunts many Americans who fear the regimentation of civil life. Nowhere is the struggle to maintain a working balance between national and local interests more sensitive than in the area of federal aid to education, especially in rural areas (Bailey and Mosher, 1968; Berke and Kirst, 1972; Murphy, 1971). This was once a rural nation which continues to jealously guard the autonomy of its local institutions in the face of prevailing nationalizing influences, including: the mass media, residential mobility, and regional disparities in wealth and in social problems. Noting that authority for education in this country has traditionally resided with the states and local school boards, the critics charge that federal regulation has increased disproportionately to the federal dollars received. A recent statement by Cronin (1976) addresses itself to that point and he concludes:

Most of the signs point to an increasingly centralized system of national education policy. This trend may, in fact, increase certain kinds of education opportunity while diminishing the traditional options of local and state governments. The junior partner is taking over the firm through sheer aggressiveness, while the senior partners fret about additional paperwork but graciously accept the extra income (p. 501).

Other observers, less nervous about federal domination, maintain that all levels of government must cooperate, not only in formulating policies but in implementing them (Reagen, 1972); that federal agencies are only one element in the total picture, and that federal influence can help equalize resources and expertise and induce local governments to perform services they could not carry on unassisted.

Whether further centralization of power is inevitable and whether, if it occurs, such centralization would necessarily undermine American values remain open questions. Although federal government agencies participate in many areas of local life, the programs are not generally operated by federal employees. On the other hand the power of local governments to resist federal pressure, co-opt federal agencies, and force modification of proposed guidelines is great enough to cause some observers to wonder if the federal government has perhaps lost control of its programs (Lazin, 1973; Lowi, 1969; Nagi, 1976; Van Horn and Van Meter, 1976). Where local autonomy has prevailed, it has often

accentuated economic disparities, paralyzed broad scale attacks on local problems and served as a bulwark of racial and economic oppression (Riker, 1964).

It is, thus, a matter of empirical investigation to determine who in fact holds the balance of power in any given program and with what consequences (Grodzins, 1966). This balance hinges partially on how contracts and grants are administered. As the representatives of the federal government in contact with local officials, the program officers can tip this balance and literally forge the shape of the federal-local partnership. Perhaps inadvertently, they have been thrust into positions of enormous responsibility. Yet very little is known about these people, the issues they face and how they carry out their responsibilities.

The Experimental Schools (ES) program offers an opportunity to study various roles played by federal program officers and to gain some insights into the nature of federal-local relationships.

THE EXPERIMENTAL SCHOOLS PROGRAM

In 1970, the United States Office of Education introduced ES to provide large, five-year block grants to selected school districts interested in implementing locally-developed plans for "comprehensive educational change." The program was a response to growing concern in the late 1960s that federal assistance had become too fragmented, lacked overall coherence at the local level and provided little room for local initiative. The ES program was designed to rectify these shortcomings through its focus on comprehensiveness and locally designed plans for change.¹ With an anticipated budget of \$190 million over eight years, the Washington ES office held three separate competitions between December 1970 and June 1972 to select 18 projects for long-term funding -- eight urban and ten rural school districts (Figure 1). This report considers only the rural districts.

Background for the Rural ES Program

The Rural ES program has passed through three phases: a selection period, a one-year planning period, and a three-year period of implementation.

The Selection Period. An announcement was mailed to all school districts in the U.S. having fewer than 2500 pupils in March of 1972. Interested districts were asked to prepare a "letter of interest" describing the district's readiness to undertake a project of comprehensive educational change.

FIGURE 1

DIMENSIONS OF THE EXPERIMENTAL SCHOOLS PROGRAM

Program recommended by President Nixon, March 1970

Program started operation, December 1970

Total number of local projects (urban and rural): 18

 Number of rural projects: 10

Total anticipated budget for ES program (eight years) \$190 million

Total funding (eight years) for ES program (approx.): \$53 million

 Funding for ten rural projects (approx.): \$6.4 million

Contribution of ES as percent of local budgets: 10 to 15%

Total number of program officers employed during course of program: 17*

Maximum number of program officers at any one time: 5

Maximum total staff at any one time: 17

Fewest program officers at any one time (prior to June 1976): 3

Lowest total staff (prior to June 1976): 4

Minimum program officer load: 2 projects

Maximum program officer load: 7 projects

Typical program officer load: 3 to 4 projects

Number of projects assigned to four different program officers over course of program: 3

Number of projects assigned to three different program officers over course of program: 4

Number of projects assigned to two different program officers over course of program: 3

First Program Director's tenure: December 1970 to December 1974

Second Program Director's tenure: December 1974 to December 1975

Third Program Director's tenure: December 1975 to present

*This figure does not include five persons assigned to program evaluation responsibilities.

Approximately 320 letters were received. Each letter was read and rated by ES/Washington staff members and five regional panels (see Herriott, 1977; Kane, 1976). Two groups of school districts were eventually selected for some participation in the small schools project. Six districts were awarded one-year grants in order to plan a five-year project of comprehensive educational change, with a "moral commitment" that subsequently they would be funded for four additional years. Six other districts received one-year planning grants, but with the understanding that long-term funding would be conditional upon the results of their planning process.

The Planning Period. Shortly after the process of site selection was completed the ES program was transferred from the Office of Education (OE) to the newly-founded National Institute of Education (NIE). Herriott (1977) notes that:

At the time the planning grants were awarded, the administrative leaders of the ten rural ES school districts were not aware of the very active role which ES/Washington staff members would play during the planning period of these projects. There seemed to be within the National Institute of Education a sense that the substantial grants to those school districts for the planning year, and the fact that the districts would subsequently be awarded large multi-year grants, made it essential that the federal government exercise a responsibility to insure successful launching of the projects. Over time, there also developed within ES/Washington a concern that its survival as a federal program depended upon the ability of these school districts to produce plans which would reflect well upon their capabilities. Given the limited planning expertise which existed in most of these districts at the time they were awarded their planning grants [and the increased vulnerability of ES/Washington within NIE noted later in this report], ES/Washington increasingly found it necessary to play a very active role in the local planning process.

The expectations which ES/Washington had for these school districts during this period were communicated in several forms:

- A formal Grant Document was prepared by the contracts office of the U.S. Office of Education in June 1972 and subsequently accepted by the Board of Education within each ES district. The document made explicit the number of dollars available to the district during the planning year and discussed more generally the purposes for which those dollars could be spent.
- Appended to the Grant Document was a set of conditions for the preparation of a Formal Project Plan.

- A federal program officer was assigned to oversee the grant relationship between the federal government and each ES school district. Such monitoring took a variety of forms and occurred through visits by ES/Washington staff members to the school district, visits of school district staff members to Washington, D.C., periodic telephone calls, and letters and memoranda (pp. 13-14).

The Washington ES office required a Formal Project Plan spelling out project goals, details of comprehensive changes to be made, procedures and resources. It was stipulated that ES/Washington must approve budget requests and all professional staff. Local districts were required to submit written drafts of their proposed plans at periodic intervals for review and suggestions for revision from Washington. Herriott (1977) observes:

While the funds for the planning year had been awarded as grants to the school districts, ES/Washington was required by NIE to contract with the school districts for the implementation of the Formal Project Plans. The budget levels were to be negotiated between the NIE contracts office and the local ES project leaders. As in any contract, both parties would bind themselves to perform: ES/Washington to pay out funds at agreed levels and at agreed times, and the school districts to produce comprehensive educational change that had been locally planned and described in detail in the Formal Project Plans (p. 18).

The Implementation Period. ES/Washington's expectations were communicated principally through the negotiation and subsequent signing of a contract between the National Institute of Education and each of the ten school districts. Discussions of long-term funding began early in 1973 with the review of draft Formal Project Plans submitted during the negotiation period and, for most of the school districts, continued on into the summer of 1973.

The typical contract document consisted of approximately ten pages, the formal expectations of ES/Washington were spelled out through a series of 16 "special provisions," the most important of which incorporated the Formal Project Plan of each school district into a "scope of work" statement calling for the implementation of that plan. A series of "deliverables" was also called for consisting of a final revision to the Formal Project Plan, a series of Quarterly Progress Reports, a series of Quarterly Financial Reports, and an Interim Project Report.

The Aims of the Program

Each local project was to be unique. There was no intention of replicating any project exactly in other school districts, nor of disseminating specific products. Rather, the aim was to see if it was possible to produce change through a few basic strategies, including: locally initiated designs; participation of lay citizens; provision for comprehensive changes that would affect the total district at all grade levels of all schools; intensive and systematic evaluation (budgeted up to 25% of the total program cost) and long-term planning with the understanding that at the end of the funding period the district would continue to support the changes it had made. In the words of an official announcement, the program was to test the hypothesis "that significant and lasting improvements in education, beyond those made possible by piecemeal innovative efforts, are more likely to occur if comprehensive changes are introduced into all elements of a school system" (National Institute of Education, 1974, p. 38).

The program was also designed to test and demonstrate the feasibility and worth of approaching school districts in a less directive, more personal and supportive style than is typical of the traditional federal bureaucratic approach to school districts. The originators hoped to aid districts where possible, to have a larger visible impact on local projects, to avoid bureaucratic snarls that result from time lag and misunderstandings and, at the same time, to hold districts more "accountable" for their use of federal funds and for the programs they are supposed to implement.

The Realities of the Program

In general, the program as it has been implemented approaches these aims, but certain differences between the vision and the reality must be understood to fully appreciate the program officers' role. First, the title "Experimental Schools program" proved to be a confusing element. In fact, it was not a well-planned social experiment, but a loosely conceived approach to funding a few selected school districts. ES was conceived and backed by several powerful sponsors who disagreed on the nature of the program. Herriott (1977) writes, "even before it had properly been started, the program had become a part of various power struggles, within the executive branch, within HEW, and

within OE itself" (p. 21). The confusion over whether this was primarily a research project, a grant in aid, or a demonstration eventually had a paralyzing effect on the program officers who, on the one hand, had a visible impact on the projects, and yet on the other hand were never sure whether it was appropriate for them to provide technical assistance, even if it were requested by the local communities.

Secondly, the program was very ambitious and not well planned. It seems inconceivable that the six million dollars allocated to ten rural school districts could have been expected to produce the extensive reform hoped for. Moreover, the overall program was launched immediately after funds for it were appropriated, which left little time to recruit personnel, select local projects, or formulate guidelines and job descriptions for program officers. This forced the program officers to assume responsibility for shaving down the broad and vague policy goals into something more feasible.

Finally, early in the program it was transferred from USOE, where it had been conceived to the National Institute of Education, where (for reasons to be explained), it had little internal support.

THE NATURE OF THE STUDY

What follows are some of my personal observations and reflections about one facet of this program, the relationships that developed between the federal program officers and the ten rural communities participating in the program. The data come largely from the following sources:

- ten program officers who completed questionnaires and were interviewed in person by the author;
- eight school administrators, representing eight of the ten rural school districts in the program, who were interviewed by telephone by the author;
- ten social scientists who were employed by Abt Associates Inc. (AAI), and assigned to live as observers in the communities to study and evaluate the local projects, and who submitted to me materials and comments regarding this study;
- site visit reports and correspondence available in files of the ES/Washington office.

Also, administrators and practitioners from a teacher training institution, a federal agency, a private foundation, and a university department of political science read and critiqued a draft of this report.

Design Limitations

It should be kept in mind that this is an exploratory case study. As the data sources suggest, the study relies primarily upon qualitative rather than quantitative modes of inquiry. I often found myself working in the mode of a "site review" team member who visits local research and development projects to assess their progress and quality of work. I was looking for some crude patterns, insofar as they could be detected in a single program composed of a wide variety of local projects, each with its own history. I have tried to be sensitive to this variation and to the limited data base while calling attention to some salient factors that might be more generalizable--wherever there was a hint of a more general problem. While I have tried to document my conclusions, this was sometimes difficult, and therefore some interpretations can and probably should be challenged.

A major limitation forced on the design by severe and unpredicted budgetary constraints was my inability to visit the ten local projects as originally planned. The study therefore relies heavily on information supplied by the ES program officers themselves and from ES files in Washington. However, I have tried to check the sources in several ways: in many instances by reporting more than one independent source of an observation, by identifying the sources of opinion expressed, by including some modest data from telephone interviews with most of the local project directors, and by checking particular facts and interpretations with the on-site observers employed by Abt Associates.

Thus, my conclusions are informed by data, even though they are not grounded in either first-hand knowledge or statistical tests. They are based largely on my own speculations, formed as I reflected upon the data and the issues for over two years. I have operated on the assumption that using qualitative modes of inquiry would be better than no inquiry at all. My objective was simply to "make sense" out of a complex situation that, to my knowledge, has not been studied previously. To the extent that this is research, it is exploratory and in the tradition of hypothesis-generating work rather than theory validation.

A second limitation of the study is that it concentrates on only one unique federal program. It would be a mistake to draw final conclusions about the general issues addressed here without further study under more diverse conditions. The traditions and the constituencies of various federal agencies and

programs make a big difference. As will be shown, this program had to overcome the reluctance of the Congress to take risks with new ideas, funding delays and cutbacks, inadequacy of funds appropriated for monitoring and support services, a traumatic transfer to a new agency about which Congress was already dubious, and the strong inclination on the part of Congress to support local officials over federal employees. Moreover, what the ES program officers were trying to do, namely to provide program assistance, was not supported by the NIE administration. Consequently, the authority of the program officers to render the services they were offering within the scope of this program was generally in doubt.

The way these program officers functioned cannot be regarded as typical of federal agencies. Their tendency to become actively involved in local projects as advisors and their readiness to provide technical assistance with specific problems, although not without precedent, are exceptional. Each ES program officer monitored only two or three contracts, whereas program officers in some other parts of HEW monitor as many as ten to 15 contracts or 20 to 30 grants. Consequently, the ES program officers had more time and opportunity to become familiar with the details of a few local projects than is true of many federal agencies. Moreover, the majority of the officers in this program were term employees drawn to Washington specifically to work on this particular program. Most were not career civil servants with broad government experience.

For all of these reasons, this program probably does not adequately test whether it is possible to carry out effectively the different program officer roles within a federal agency.

Nevertheless, some facets of this program do parallel the procedures used to monitor certain large research and development centers, and at least a few large-scale domestic programs sponsored by OEO, HUD, and CETA. Under some circumstances, most agencies are probably tempted to provide the services offered by the ES program officers; it seems very likely that at least a few program directors in Washington would like to provide more consulting advice and technical assistance to local projects. To some extent, the ES program serves as an extreme case to highlight both the potentials and the hazards of labor-intensive federal program assistance.

Overview

The subsequent discussion unfolds as follows. Three types of roles played by program officers are described and analyzed. One of these roles, contract management, is the one for which program officers typically are held responsible. This volume is primarily concerned with the effects and feasibility of two more active roles, namely, the provision of advice and technical assistance to local projects. While these two roles are not unprecedented, they are far less frequent than contract management. Several ways of combining all three roles are also considered, together with some reasons for the stylistic differences reported among program officers. The ways in which program officers had an impact on local projects are then reviewed, and several reasons offered for the wide variations in impact that occurred over time and from place to place. The ways in which program officers differed among themselves are also considered. Finally, some conclusions are drawn about the advantages and disadvantages of federal assistance, as well as some conditions that affect the ability of a federal agency to provide it in a large program such as ES.

SUMMARY

This is an exploratory case study of the roles carried out by federal program officers in the Experimental Schools (ES) program. The study relies upon qualitative rather than quantitative modes of analysis. The conclusions are limited by lack of prior research on this topic, the nature of the data that could be obtained for this study, and the unique features of the program as outlined in this chapter. Nevertheless, the topic deserves attention, and in fact, given the dearth of information currently available, exploratory inquiries such as this are entirely appropriate and urgently needed. Government agencies should give more attention to the problems faced by program officers in order to help them improve their relationships with local communities. For, as communication links and mediators between federal and local circumstances, program officers can make or break the federal-local partnership.

The next chapter sketches the backgrounds of the ES program officers and describes the complex set of roles they attempted to play.

CHAPTER NOTE

1. This report makes an important distinction between the terms "program" and "project," with the former referring to an organizational unit at the federal level and the latter to that at the local level. Organizational units within projects are referred to as "components."

CHAPTER TWO. THE PROGRAM OFFICER: A THREE-DIMENSIONAL PORTRAIT

After a brief discussion of ES program officer background, we shall turn immediately to their description of their work with the ten rural school districts. Of course, all of their views cannot be accepted at face value, but I have relied heavily upon their statements when they made sense within the sociological frameworks that I have been able to apply. I have tried to avoid using statements that were not expressed by at least two sources.

The framework employed here was developed in the following way. The program officers were asked in interviews to describe both their primary responsibilities and their "styles" of working with local projects, and to elaborate by describing specific incidents. After a careful examination of the interviews, it seemed to me that the responsibilities they described clustered into three distinct roles, which I have labeled contract manager, project advisor, and technical assistance specialist. While there is always a danger that such labels will be misused as stereotypes, it seems to me that in the structure of the federal government the contract manager role is primary, the one that program officers usually must fill. The advisory role also may be appropriate at times, but it is less well institutionalized and not as well understood. The technical assistance role, while not unprecedented, is novel and therefore warrants much of our attention here.

After having identified those three roles in a preliminary way, I drew upon my general knowledge of the sociological literature pertaining to interaction in social systems for a set of concepts that could be used to analyze each role in more detail. While there is no one source for the four concepts that I selected, they are widely regarded by various sociologists as basic components of any social system (although not necessarily the only components). The four concepts, referred to here as "role components," are discussed later in this chapter: intensity of role involvement, type of communication, basis of authority, and scope of influence. Identifying role components in this way can help to anticipate potential role conflicts that arise when the roles are combined, and (as will be seen in Chapter Five) to pinpoint conditions that must be present for these three roles to be adequately performed.

THE PROGRAM OFFICERS' BACKGROUNDS

The program officers came from a variety of backgrounds, which seem to affect the way in which they worked with the local projects. Their modal age (for five of the ten) was between 35 and 45 years. Three were 50 years old and two were between 28 and 34. Typically, they had earned a master's degree (six of the ten) but two had earned doctorates and two had a bachelor's degree or its equivalent. Only four of the ten had majored in education while in college. Others majored in humanities and social science, communication and public administration.

As a group they were relatively inexperienced with education. Five of them had no prior teaching or school administration experience. Only two of the five who had taught mentioned prior experience with experimental educational programs. Three reported over six years of teaching experience and two reported over five years of school administration experience.

Most of the ES program officers had held jobs outside of the field of education and six of them had at least a few years of experience in some specialized area such as research, planning, evaluation or budgeting. Five had come to their positions very recently (within 12 to 18 months prior to this study). Only two had been assigned to this program for as long as three years.

In short, several of the ten program officers had little prior experience with schools or with the sensitive relationship between school administrators and school boards, and several had no training in education. Few possessed much formal knowledge of, or personal experience with, rural communities in different regions of the United States. Others had at least some experience in schools, if not with rural communities. All these individuals were thrust into demanding situations, calling for a level of expertise that could justify being treated as colleagues of experienced school administrators. Most important, they were all attempting to carry out the responsibilities of three quite different types of roles.

THREE PRIMARY ROLES

The Contract Manager Role

All ES program officers assumed management responsibilities. This role is far more typical of what program officers traditionally do than the other

two roles. One program officer refers to this responsibility as a routine "watchdog" role.

I see [it] pretty much as a rote type of thing. The things that are specified in the contract ... are carried out; the financial reports get in; the progress reports get in; the money is enough, but not too much; they request equipment when they're supposed to; and they do it in the way they're supposed to. So that's pretty much a paperwork type thing.

Speaking of this role, another program officer observes:

... it's my responsibility to see that the school district does what they said they were going to do. There's been some procedures set up for that: monitoring how they are spending their money, reviewing quarterly reports, other documents that come in from the project and, from time to time, requesting documents or things that have been developed from the project, and then occasionally visiting the project to see if those things have been done. Also, requests for changes in what they want to do, and particularly when they result in changing some line item in the budget, are funneled through this office and then on to Contracts and Grants.

Types of Responsibilities. This role seems to involve two different types of responsibilities: (a) monitoring, which means securing information and exercising general surveillance over the project; and (b) enforcement of the contract provisions through corrective action where necessary, including termination of a contract or part of it. Both these responsibilities apply to the two major dimensions of any federal program: fiscal matters and program content. The program officer shares fiscal responsibilities with another federal employee, the contract officer. While the latter assumes the primary legal responsibility for all fiscal aspects of a contract, the program officer must monitor expenditures to certify that they are related to the program goals, authorize or disallow purchases, and see that the program is spending on schedule. It is his or her responsibility, as one program officer expressed it, "to make sure that what they say they're going to do in the plan is in fact given strong consideration if not carried out."

In the ES program, each local project was required to provide for its own systematic evaluation of the project, and an outside research firm (Abt Associates Inc.) was contracted by ES/Washington to undertake systematic evaluation across all ten communities. This information potentially provided a more systematic way for ES to monitor the projects than is usually available to

federal agencies through periodic reports and occasional site visits. However, for this very reason, the local school districts feared the evaluations, since an evaluation report could publicize or distort certain things and jeopardize local personnel and projects.

The contractual nature of the relationship was used by ES program officers as the basis of their enforcement responsibilities. A program officer who had prior government experience as a contracts specialist noted that once a local project is under way, it should not be allowed to change plans before they have been adequately tested and assessed:

One of the biggest problems with educational research is that the school system would get into something, and about half way through they would decide that they really wanted to do three other things and they went off into those directions, and you never found out what happened to the first things and you ended up with nothing. You had no data that correlated. And we did not determine, unlike most federal programs, what the sites were to do. We only determined the procedure that they were to use.

The contract provided some protection to local communities as well. The same program officer went on to say:

It had the benefit to them of being a bilateral agreement. We could not unilaterally change the terms of that agreement, unlike a grant, which is a unilateral agreement on the part of the government and can be withdrawn or altered at will. Now the grantee can also refuse to go along with it and get out of it, but there is not a lot of negotiation there. A contract is much more difficult to terminate for convenience than a grant...We didn't want program officers saying, "Instead of putting in a reading program, why don't you try math?" We both got benefits. We got the discipline, and they got the protection.

But this protection applied only to those matters which were explicitly treated. Actually, the communities agreed to several key provisions that were not well defined. For example, in principle they agreed that the project should produce "comprehensive" change, but as one program officer admits:

We didn't necessarily think through, as a group, and come to some sort of consensus on what the behavioral manifestations would be of what we expected. I mean, what did it actually mean to expect a comprehensive plan or expect community involvement, and how would that translate into our behavior on site?

Another source complained about the awkward position in which this placed the program officer:

I was responsible for going over their drafts and criticizing them from some basis, which really wasn't specified--something to do with "feasibility", and whatever "comprehensiveness" was ... I looked for obvious failure to see how elements in the plan would connect with each other ... but I thought that some of the kinds of things that were vetoed by the staff here were arbitrary. And I found that I was in the middle of the situation; that I really couldn't explain to a local community why things in their plan weren't acceptable. I found that the most difficult, because I didn't think there was a firm guideline to give them.

Organizations with a hierarchical structure but an egalitarian philosophy find it difficult to innovate. One resolution is for the organization to assume that the participants will simultaneously "discover" the plan of the decision-makers. One program officer gave the very strong impression to a community that it would not be funded until it independently stumbled into what ES/Washington had in mind all along. This officer gave the impression to local administrators that he knew exactly what was wanted but adamantly refused to say what it was. For example, the program officer required the community to rewrite the entire proposal, to direct it toward a local rather than a professional audience. One school board member responded, "You are the one who is going to write the plan. You know you are. Just tell us what you want. If you want it in red ink, we'll write it in red ink. If you want it in green ink, we'll write in green ink."

Importance. This managerial role was viewed by the originators of the program as important. Given the large federal commitment to this program in time and dollars, it was argued that "an unusually rigorous project monitoring system" was required (Budding, 1972). However, there was also a concern expressed that the monitoring not become a license for federal intervention, and that project support be guaranteed subject only to "gross-malfeasance in the use of public money or total abandonment of the particular attempt" (Budding, 1972).

The program officers reported numerous instances in which they found it necessary to enforce their management responsibilities, especially as the program matured. While they seldom reported taking steps to ensure contract compliance during the selection stage, such steps were reported in one half

of the situations during the negotiation and implementation periods Appendix C, Item 1).¹ Disapproving formal requests also became very frequent (Appendix C, Item 3). Several of the program officers also report that they have often advised school administrators that they were using inappropriate procedures (Appendix C, Item 2) and that the plans they were considering probably would be disapproved if submitted (Appendix C, Item 4). Although conceding that this is the conventional program officer role, most of the federal employees in this program did not really enjoy these duties. As one lamented:

I guess I'm almost operating in the traditional program officer fashion, where you pick up the phone and say, "Your quarterly report is due"; and "Get your 5140s in"; and "You made a mistake on this form"; and that kind of crap. Well, it's fine. I have no particular quarrel with that, except I don't want to do it.

His comment suggests that this is a highly routinized role which in effect limits the program officer's discretion. However, the fact that it is a routine role does not minimize the power an officer can bring to bear on a community which fails to comply with the terms of the contract or with administrative procedures.

This underlying element of power was awkward for some program officers to deal with as indicated in the comment:

I am uncomfortable in ... that kind of authority position that some of them perceive us to be in. I don't like that feeling. I am not used to it I guess. I used to work with superintendents all the time, always working for them and that's how they viewed it and it was a good relationship. Here, I am not working for them and that's clear, they know that. It's difficult to develop that kind of relations with those guys. They don't want to lose control, they don't want to lose power, they don't want to appear weak to us.

The Project Advisor Role

But in the ES program, management was only one aspect of the program officer's position. As one commented, "we tried to work toward a different concept of monitoring--an expanded concept." As one aspect of this new concept, the program officers felt a responsibility to help projects to be as successful as possible. In the words of one:

... my function is primarily to ... work with the school district and insure that they come close to fulfilling that plan.... And doing that means ... serving as a gadfly at times, trying to stimulate them and pique them, and keeping them from becoming complacent, by looking at the district--and their reporting cycle and from site visits--finding areas of weakness and pointing them out to the project people ...

As another explained this role:

[It] actually involves closer contact with the district in a more aggressive way; building relationships with people within the project; digging into what they are doing--more than just a sort of surface monitoring.... [Instead we] ask questions, like "Why did you choose to do it in this particular way?" "Had you ever thought about this or that?" "What other alternatives did you consider?" and that's not always in retrospect; that's in advance of decisions being made.

Raising pointed questions may be an important part of this role:

Trying to see whether questions had been asked about how receptive a group of, say, teachers, would be to a change; or whether there were facilities for carrying it out, or some kind of back-up; just generally, whether it was practical, and whether it was an obvious attempt to meet existing needs that were kind of piecemeal and fitted together without going to the first stage of developing a rationale....

One program officer described the role in this way:

Well, let's take this problem ... 30% of the children in the elementary grades are not reading, writing and spelling and doing arithmetic at grade level, at the end of grade six. Then we come up with some goals and we then say, "Five years from now, all the children in the elementary grades will now have improved. We teach now in a self-contained classroom, so we are going to put in team teaching. And in five years the school will all be changed." Well then, the role for me was to say, "How are you going to do that? Doesn't the change take 12 years?" So that you become involved in the way they planned.... That is, "If your budget permits only x number of aides and x number of technical assistants, what could you seriously accomplish in five years' time?"

Sometimes, the "advice" amounted to little more than providing encouragement to local officials to follow up their own tentative ideas:

I don't know that these are really recommendations on my part. These are things that I pick up, either from visits or from reports, that they would like to do. For example, with the library [component] ... what I did was simply to write them asking questions: "How is this coming along?" "Are you still interested in it?"

Types of Responsibilities. This role is obviously very complex. A key to the difference between it and contract management is that the program officer becomes more directly concerned about the substance of the local project and tries to assist in shaping its direction and working out its problems. This requires greater personal initiative and discretion on the part of the program officer. In the words of one program officer, the role "can range from serving as a sounding board for what they're thinking about to suggesting some things that they need to do or consider in terms of the plan that they have spelled out." Or, it may mean, "holding a mirror up for them to see, or holding their feet to the fire if that's the case. Or, in some cases it's persuading them to back off from a process they're using or a direction they're going." Another program officer thought of it as interpreting the government's interest in the project to the local community, to remind them of the original objectives, and to encourage the project personnel to consider more than one way of proceeding. But to simplify, it seems to include at least four different types of diagnostic and prescriptive responsibilities:

- Interpretation, i.e., translating the language used in the contract into operational criteria, e.g., determining whether or not a reading program for only three grades satisfies the requirement that the change must be "comprehensive";
- Challenge, or prodding local officials to justify their plans and actions and to provide a rationale;
- Criticism, or finding fault with particular aspects of the project and making judgments;
- Recommendations, i.e., proposing one or more alternative courses of action to be considered.

Importance. As the program has matured, the program officers have become more aggressive about suggesting solutions to implementation problems and exerting influence on specific implementation procedures (Appendix C, Item 10). However, this influence appears to have been limited to implementation procedures. They rarely claim to have proposed a component of the project plan that was later implemented (even though they may have participated in the discussions) (Appendix C, Item 13). Perhaps aside from a few instances, they also deny having had much influence on the design or goals of local projects

(Appendix C, Items 11 & 13). Moreover, they report that, as the program has evolved, local administrators have typically come to them for advice (Appendix C, Item 14). Except during the selection stage, they have felt free to offer criticisms and advice whether it was solicited or not (Appendix C, Item 30), and typically they believe that administrators have tried to implement their advice (Appendix C, Item 12), apparently even when it was not solicited.

The program officers generally enjoyed this role and considered it to be very important. As one summarized, "We came [to ES/Washington] because that was to be our role. [We were] to be active persons working with the sites." One program officer saw his role as:

... a major step toward eradicating this traditional "dragon" of federal relationships with the local people. What I mean by that is that by being more visible and more accessible to them, especially the community, it would allow for their looking at the federal government with other than a jaundiced eye. What I'm talking about here is that there must be an authentic relationship forged between the local people and the federal government. Because most of what I have seen has been a kind of inauthentic role in that the federal government ... to most people represents a pot of money; and a community can't understand, for example, why we can't just give out the money and then leave....I think by being out there often, being visible and letting them observe what you are doing, telling them what your role is all about, they begin to see that there are different kinds of governmental relationships with the private sector. It begins to dispel some of the myths about federal procurement [in the minds of] local people.

The Technical Assistance Role

In the advisory capacity, the program officers were generally concerned about project design. The problem remained that, even if the program officers' advice were accepted in principle, it could not be implemented properly unless the local community had the necessary technical capacity. If either the local officials or the program officer doubted this capacity, s/he might offer (or be invited to provide) some of this assistance. Thus program officers became involved in implementation. As a former ES director explained, "What's a program officer supposed to do? One argument is that he is supposed to respond to the call for help." A program officer confided, "Having had experience with schools my whole professional career, I can't help but see some things that I'm interested in where I've got some expertise, and I really don't hesitate to offer it if I'm asked, and in some cases even if I'm not."

One of the persons interviewed described his role this way:

[Suppose] they had decided what they wanted to do. But they said, "Say, I am not sure how; what would be the things we would have to do in order to do that?" Then we would all sit down and roll up our sleeves and take a yellow pad, and we'd sort of brain storm and maybe come up with a strategy together. At least in my case, all the deciding would be theirs.

Another, who spent much of his time in this role, explained:

... my role became that type of a program officer who came in and actually rolled up his sleeves and went to work with the project, to examine plans that they were developing and to look over the data that they had gathered and make suggestions and serve as a kind of a "friend of the court."

When the program officers assumed this role, they thought of themselves as colleagues, or partners in a common enterprise. One refers to it as an "interactive" role:

I take my role to be a partner in an experiment, and while I may be a silent partner in a sense that I don't actually do the work, I certainly am involved in the project I stay out of the actual decision-making, in the sense that the operation of the project is theirs; it's not the federal government's and they're responsible for delivering the product or contract. But nevertheless, if I see, in my judgment, that they're putting themselves into jeopardy, I consider it my responsibility to point that out. And if they continue to do it, then fine, that's their decision.

Types of Responsibilities. At least three types of responsibility seem to be part of this role:

- Actually working on implementation; for instance, interviewing candidates for jobs on local projects, or modifying an evaluation design;
- Brokering for technical advice, i.e., acting as a go-between to suggest consultants whom the local project should hire to provide certain types of advice;
- Advocacy, or in other words, occasionally representing the local project's interests to the federal bureaucracy; i.e., intervening in a dispute between a local community and the federal contracts office to support the project's request to purchase a questionable item or to deviate from established procedure.

After the projects became operational, most of the program officers report having helped local administrators obtain approval for changes in their contracts. As one program officer recalled:

We spent a lot of time ... trying to identify some of the areas in which the bureaucracy could, in fact, get in the way [and] hinder the involvement of a smaller school district who didn't have years and years of experience of dealing directly with the federal government. I'm sure [the local officials] ... didn't understand it because they didn't see all ... the interference that had been taken care of before the fact. In fact, one program officer thought of herself as a "double agent."

Importance. The technical assistance role has become more prominent as the projects have become operational (Appendix C, Item 5). In fact, it is typical. Most program officers report that they often perform this function. In about half of the instances during the recent implementation stage, their help was solicited, but in many cases there was apparently no clear invitation (Appendix C, Item 13). Much of their assistance was to help local administrators formulate or clarify their plans (Appendix C, Item 7).

Not surprisingly, some program officers devoted a large portion of their time to technical assistance:

[The largest part of my job] is being on the phone (I'd say maybe three hours a week) with the site, talking with building principals; for example, discussing the degree of implementation ... trying to find out what areas they need help on, or if I can get somebody to help them with their technical assistance.

In one case, recently, I was talking to somebody who's developing a native American program, and I have been trying to put him in touch with people, giving him references to materials and that sort of thing; and then also with the central office in helping them to prepare financial budgets and to do financial planning for the year and the quarters individually ... so, I would say that technical assistance is the largest aspect of my function.

But, while most of the program officers might have enjoyed this role, and some of them spent much of their time on it, at least one had reservations about its legitimacy; "I enjoy the idea of technical assistance, of just sitting down and rolling up my sleeves and getting into it, but I don't see that as much as a legitimate role."

ROLE PROFILES

Each role described in the preceding section contains the potential to forge very different federal-local relationships. Exactly how different can be more fully appreciated by comparing the "components" of each role. I have identified four components which seem to differentiate among roles: type of communication, intensity of involvement, basis of authority, and scope of influence.² They are not entirely independent, but it will be useful for our purposes here to consider each component separately.

Type of Communication

The management role is based on, and circumscribed by, the contract which formally defines rights and obligations in a hierarchical relationship.

By contrast, the technical assistance role casts a collegial relationship which is less explicitly formalized and circumscribed than the managerial role. It permits the program officer to exercise much more discretion in determining how his or her influence will be exerted, and decisions are made on the basis of feedback and mutual adjustment. Accordingly, the program officer's actions will be less predictable.

The advisory role overlaps with the other two roles, blending the contractual with the collegial styles. Therefore, responsibilities in this role shift fluidly, and the parties involved often are confused about their respective rights and obligations.

Intensity of Involvement

The degree to which the program officer becomes involved with the details of implementation also differs among the roles. Remote forms of supervision suffice for the managerial role, e.g., periodic review of progress and adherence to standard schedules. This supervisory style seldom provides the program officer with enough detailed information for him to provide much assistance with implementation.

At the other extreme, technical assistance requires the program officer to collect detailed knowledge about the day-to-day operations of the project, which puts him in a position to affect local planning.

To be an effective critic and advisor, the officer needs more information than is typically available to a manager, but less than would be required to provide adequate technical assistance. In combination, these first two dimensions begin to describe the three roles portrayed in Figure 2.

Figure 2

TYPES OF SYSTEM LINKAGE:
Communication and Intensity of Involvement

Type of Communication	Intensity of Involvement With Implementation	
	High	Low
Contractual	Contract Specialist*	Contract Manager
Collegial	Technical Assistance Specialist	Project Advisor

*The Contract Specialist type of linkage was not present in the ES program. However, it can be found in the large "hardware" oriented programs, such as in NASA where very detailed specifications govern the relationship. The Contract Specialists in such programs oversee specific components which they must understand in detail; yet they are not able to have an impact on program implementation once the specifications have been established.

Basis of Authority

The authority of the program officer to manage the contract is inherent in his or her formal position in the federal bureaucracy, which is in turn governed by legislation and standard administrative procedures. But for his technical advice to be accepted, the program officer must convince local officials that he or she has the necessary training and experience, i.e., technical competence. Again, the right to act as an advisor overlaps with the two roles. To some extent this right is inherent in the position, but it also presumes a necessary level of technical competence. And again, this role can be confusing in particular instances, especially if the program officer does not have the necessary competence.

Scope of Influence

Having the authority to exert influence, however, is not the same thing as actually being influential. One may have more or less influence than either the position or one's competence might warrant. Influence differs from the other components mentioned in that it is not inherent in particular roles. Influence is a product of many forces in addition to one's role, including the individual's initiative and the other person's will and ability to resist. A program officer can be influential in any of the roles, but the role does circumscribe the scope of his influence, that is, the number of different aspects of a project s/he can affect.

As a contract manager, a program officer can virtually control whether the project will survive, or whether the contract can be altered. Such decisions can affect the entire project. By contrast, because the capacity of program officers to give competent advice is limited by their own specialized backgrounds, they tend to concentrate on particular components of a project when they act in an advisory capacity. Their advice is therefore likely to affect fewer aspects of a project than their actions as contract managers; as managers they are responsible for seeing that all components of a project are successfully completed, even those for which they do not have expertise. The scope of influence afforded by the advisory role is therefore indeterminant, and probably depends to a great extent on the program officer's interests and competence.

The same logic applies to technical assistance. But because technical assistance is even more time consuming than offering advice, program officers advise on more components of a project than they can possibly take the time to work on in a technical way themselves. The scope of their influence in this role is extremely limited.

By combining these two components, authority and scope of influence, the three roles can be further specified as indicated in Figure 3. The blank cells in the figure suggest some potential conflict situations. For example, a contract manager whose authority resides in her/his official position might expect some criticism if s/he seems to be preoccupied with one aspect of the project to the neglect of its other features (the Formal Position - Focused Scope cell). And a program officer's credibility as an expert will be questioned if that person acts like a "jack of all trades" by volunteering advice about too many components of a project (the Personal Competence - Broad Scope cell).

The three roles can be summarized in terms of the profiles outlined in Figure 4.

BACKGROUNDS RELATED TO OPINIONS AND ROLES

In view of the differences in their backgrounds (noted at the beginning of this chapter) it is not surprising that program officers express widely different opinions about some aspects of the local projects and about their own roles.

Differences in Perceptions and Opinions

On the question of whether local administrators were well qualified to direct the projects to which the program officers had been assigned, their answers ranged from "strongly disagree" to "agree" (see Appendix C, Item 18).³ On the question of how frequently they had been helpful to these local projects, their answers ranged from "seldom" to "very frequently," but typically they judged the situation as "mixed."

There were comparable variations in the priority the ES program officers gave to the various roles. Two program officers reported that they seldom exercised their management responsibilities, but several others said they often

Figure 3

TYPES OF SYSTEM LINKAGE:
Scope of Influence and Basis of Authority

Potential Scope of Influence	Basis of Authority		
	Formal Position	Position and Competence	Personal Competence
Broad	Contract Manager	Project Advisor	Technical Assistance Specialist
Intermediate			
Focused			

Figure 4

SYSTEM LINKAGE PROFILES

Role Components	Linkage Roles		
	Contract Manager	Project Advisor	Technical Assistance Specialist
Intensity of Role Involvement	Low	High	Very High
Type of Communication	Contractual	Collegial and Contractual	Collegial
Basis of Authority	Formal Position	Position and Competence	Personal Competence
Scope of Influence	Broad	Intermediate	Focused

found themselves in this role. Then, too, one program officer reported providing technical assistance very frequently and two others provided it often; whereas another seldom provided it. The others reported mixed situations.

The frequency with which they provided advice that influenced implementation varied from "seldom" to "often," but typically the situation was "mixed." They seldom advised on goals, but there was at least one exception; one program officer said that he often gave advice on goals. One program officer said that he was often solicited for advice or technical assistance, but several others said that they were seldom asked.

Relationship of Backgrounds to Roles

These differences can be explained to some degree by the backgrounds of the program officers. Though respondents are few in number, some crude correlations among their responses provide clues (Appendix D summarizes the measures used). There was a tendency for those who had taught longer to believe that they had been more helpful ($r = .91$), and for those who have spent more time in specialized work to have a lower estimate of their helpfulness ($r = -.82$). Those with more teaching ($r = -.75$) and more administrative experience ($r = -.84$) also had lower estimates of the competence of the local administrators to direct this kind of project.

Those who had taught in more schools tended to stress the technical assistance role ($r = .62$) and to neglect the managerial role ($r = -.85$). It may be significant, however, that teaching experience did not seem to be related to the amount of advice given about either implementation or goals, and if it was related to specialized work the correlation was negative. Nor was any of these roles related to the type of degree a program officer held or her/his major field in college. One reason may be that when some of them were hired during the early years of the ES program, there was no plan for them to offer technical assistance.

Each of these two-variable relationships was graphed for the eight program officers who supplied all requested information. A careful examination of these graphs revealed that the one program officer who provided the most technical assistance also had several years of teaching experience and

had taught in several schools; it is also clear that the two who provided the least assistance had little teaching experience. But these graphs also revealed something that seems equally significant. At least one program officer who frequently provided technical assistance had little teaching experience, and one with teaching experience provided little assistance.

The individual who provided the most technical assistance also paid the least attention to the managerial responsibilities, but for most of the program officers this trade-off was not quite so extreme. The two persons who placed the most stress on the managerial role both had several years of teaching experience.

The relationship between teaching experience and technical assistance paralleled what has been said about the relationship between experience and implementation. However, one person did have far less influence on implementation than would have been predicted from his behavior in the technical assistance role.

The program officer who had the most influence on implementation also had the most influence on goals; similarly, at the other extreme, one person ranked low on both of these measures. But another individual who had a high degree of influence on implementation reported very little influence on goals; in still another case, this pattern was reversed.

SUMMARY

The ES program officers expressed varied opinions and held somewhat different perceptions about their relationships with local officials. They also came from a variety of backgrounds. Some had prior experience as employees of local school districts, while others did not. Few were well prepared to work with the type of rural communities involved in the program. And they were all thrust into demanding situations in which they were attempting to carry out the simultaneous responsibilities of three different types of roles.

Those program officers who had taught longer and in more schools tended to believe they had been more helpful, whereas those who had spent more time in specialized work tended to have a lower estimate of their helpfulness. Those with more teaching and more administrative experience also had lower estimates of the competence of the local administrators to direct their projects. Some

of them also tended to stress the technical assistance role and to neglect their managerial responsibilities.

It may be significant, however, that teaching experience did not seem to be related to the amount of advice given about either implementation or goals, and if it was related to specialized experience the correlation was negative. Nor was any of these roles related to the type of degree a program officer held, or his major in college.

One way to gain better insight into the roles, now that they have been described abstractly, is to speculate how a program officer might respond to a local project that is behind schedule and having difficulty implementing some of its components. Let us say, for example, the project has not been able to develop an adequate evaluation plan as called for by its contract. As a contract manager, a program officer might respond like this. First, s/he might remind the local project director of the original deadlines, and then perhaps call for an investigation. Subsequently, the officer might either negotiate new deadlines or terminate the project. If s/he ventures any recommendations, they probably will be limited to the parameters of the contract itself, e.g., that the project scale back its goals, increase its staff, or request funds to provide for more outside help. S/he also might be inclined to entertain a request from the local project director to reduce the scope of work statement or increase the size of the budget. In all of these respects, her/his posture remains rather remote from the details of the project itself.

But in the advisory role, the program officer becomes more aggressive and concerned about finding the source of the project's problems so that they can be corrected. S/he will try to become more familiar with project activities, staff capabilities, and any constraints that might be present within the school district. With this information, s/he might volunteer advice about how the project could cope with its problems. S/he might evaluate the materials being used and suggest the names of consultants who should be called in. S/he might recommend that the school district should reassign personnel or hire new personnel. S/he might help them to reinterpret the meaning of evaluation in this particular situation, or to elaborate on what does and does not meet the agency's requirements. S/he might evaluate,

criticize, and challenge the project plans, pointing out weaknesses or unfeasible designs. In short, the program officer takes an active interest in the substance of the project, recommending alternative courses of action.

In the technical assistance role, the program officer becomes even more involved with the details of selected project activities. S/he may spend days working with local project members helping to redesign a component or to develop new materials. S/he may help the district locate and interview new personnel. S/he may procure technical consultants for the district and, if it seems advisable, work out the details necessary to increase the scope of the contract. If it is necessary to renegotiate the budget, s/he might help the district with that task and then take the case to her/his superiors, acting as representative and advocate for the local project.

The complexity of these roles can be better understood by considering the several components of each. It was shown that differences among the roles are matters of degree and that they differ in at least four respects: the intensity of the program officer's involvement in the project, the type of communication with the project, the basis of the program officer's authority, and the scope of her/his influence. Each role consists of a profile of these four component variables. When these components are considered one by one we can begin to anticipate role conflicts that could arise when components are combined in inappropriate ways and identify the conditions that must be present for each role to be performed adequately.

But of course, we have thus far been describing analytic distinctions. In practice program officers combine these roles in various ways. The way they mix the roles determines their performance style, that is their manner of working with local projects. The various styles they used will be illustrated in the next chapter.

CHAPTER NOTES

1. Occasionally throughout this discussion, reference is made to the way program officers answered some questionnaire items. All items referred to are listed in Appendix C. The percentages cited are based on the number of observations they made, not on the absolute number of program officers. This is because several program officers completed a separate questionnaire for each site for which she or he was responsible. The percentages reflect the number of observations made by the ten program officers at each stage of the ten projects. Note too that different program officers were usually involved at different stages of the project.

2. Distinctions are being made here among influence, scope of influence, and intensity of involvement. Influence refers to the probability that directives or suggestions will be carried out; if that probability is high it can be called "control" rather than influence. The scope of influence refers to the number of different aspects of a project that are affected. By comparison, intensity of involvement implies the (a) potential to influence (b) specific aspects of a project. For example, providing technical assistance in the area of evaluation, a program officer can influence the evaluation plan (if his advice is accepted). But if that is the only aspect of the project that he affects, his scope of influence remains limited.

3. Between two and four program officers answered items specific to each site. For purposes of this analysis, the responses of program officers were summed and averaged for each site. Also all project stages have been combined. However, one officer assigned to two sites did not answer this portion of the questionnaire.

CHAPTER THREE. PERFORMANCE STYLES

Given the range and complexity of these three roles, ES program officers could use their own discretion to decide how much emphasis should be given to each of their various responsibilities. They adopted very different performance styles, depending on the way the roles were mixed. To simplify, I will concentrate here on only two stylistic features that help to account for some of these differences:

- The amount of directiveness exercised by the program officer;
- The program officer's involvement with, and sensitivity to, the local project's problems and values.

These two dimensions identify four types of styles outlined in Figure 5.

FOUR STYLES

The Uninvolved and Directive Style

This style evolved when managerial and advisory roles were combined. The program officers felt uneasy with this style, but acknowledged that they did use it. In the words of one program officer:

I have had the experience where it has been a strictly very formal type of relationship. I'm "the government," and I come in and they have to listen; and they know that; and they do. But they don't go any further than that.

Another program officer observes:

There are [program officers] who are strong interventionists, and who have a fixed idea about the projects and what the projects should achieve, and who set out to make them do that. That's certainly one school of project monitorship. And they may have more immediate effect. [But] I don't believe that that kind of thing is going to contribute to long range change in the district... A design is imposed on a community, and...at the end of the fourth year of that project, I find people rebelling and saying, "For Christ's sake, this isn't our work--this is ES coming in here and imposing the design on us."

The Involved and Directive Style

Program officers might also adopt a very different style by combining the managerial role with the technical assistance role. When they did this, they could remain directive, even over project operations, but they operated

FIGURE 5
PERFORMANCE STYLES

Involvement in Project	Directiveness	
	Directive	Non-Directive
Involved	Involved and Directive	Involved and Non-Directive
Uninvolved	Uninvolved and Directive	Uninvolved and Non-Directive

from a better knowledge base, and hence greater sensitivity to local interests and concerns. One program officer's comments suggest some elements of this style:

When something wasn't working well, I would say, "Look, that particular component just hasn't got off the ground! Why is that?" Then he would volunteer a few things, and I would say, "Well, okay; do we still need that component, or is that just something on paper in the plan? If you still feel it is a worthwhile component, then you had better get some specific objectives. So, why don't we do that? Together we'll think through that, and then you submit to me a management plan by such and such a date..." There were times when I did give directions: "You will by such and such a date have interviewed the following; by such and such a date you will have selected your local evaluators, or else we cannot release the funds." But I never felt I was threatening or hostile.

One source reported that a fellow program officer:

...often found himself siding against the superintendent in front of the board... I am not very comfortable with [his] type [of intervention] where you go into the school board and fight for what you think is right.

In one long hard bargaining session, the above program officer was determined to cut items out of the budget but the director of the local project fought hard to keep them in. The program officer's position was that because the school system was having difficulty passing budgets, it should start scaling down its expenditures years in advance of the end of federal funding if voters were ever to pick up the costs. When two instructional leaders left their jobs, the program officer insisted that their positions should be eliminated. After long negotiations one position was eliminated against the resistance of other school officials.

Note that "directiveness," in this context, means only that the program officers had a point of view and a clear idea about the preferred outcome. They could be directive in very subtle or even unintended ways. One program officer who referred to his style as "Aristotelian," suggests how pressure can be subtly applied:

I rarely give a direct order to the projects. I rarely give a long monologue unless I am really moved to, and I rarely do that. I usually try to arrive at things through questions, asking them questions, leading them. And I know that's what I am doing, and I have to assume that they know that too, leading them down a particular path. I usually have an idea of where I want them to end up.

Even more frequent were instances when a program officer's suggestions were interpreted as being directive even if that was not the intent:

And you may say something that you don't think is directive at all, and it may be taken that way because, in fact, you're a representative from Washington.

The Involved and Non-Directive Style

This is the interactive, collegial relationship that most program officers idealized. It is the epitome of the technical assistance role, often mixed with certain responsibilities from the advisory role. One respondent described this role as she recalled how a colleague had worked with local communities:

And she was able to give some very concrete, helpful, suggestions. But she never force-fed anybody. She would not say, "I think you should use this approach." It was much more, "Have you looked into this? And have you investigated this kind of curriculum?" My experience with her was that...she tried very hard not to tell people what to do.

Another program officer explains that he approached a project like this:

If I spend time talking with the building principals, I try to find ways to encourage them to get involved with the project, because I really think that when you get to be a building principal in a community like this, there's very little incentive to bring about change. And I've worked with them, asking them, "Would you go to this meeting and then tell me what happened," and "Why don't you invite people into the schools, parents to come into the schools, and visit with you?" I think that I've had some significant impact...

Local people in one community reputedly appreciated one program officer who was regarded as being very honest, not pulling any punches and "calling a spade a spade." He had high credibility in a part of the country that traditionally respects that kind of behavior.

Program officers often stressed the importance of becoming sufficiently involved with the project to understand the community's power structure and become sensitive to its problems and values. One source emphasized this quality as he favorably described a colleague:

[She] was quick to pick up the nuances that made small schools different from suburban and city schools and to play, not on their weaknesses, but to play on their strengths.

But for various reasons program officers sometimes failed to live up to this ideal. For example, one program officer was described as extremely "aggressive, officious and threatening." Some principals reported they were outraged when she visited with teachers in a lounge without first notifying the principal that she was in the building.

This program officer is very critical about a colleague who was insensitive to local norms:

She tended to be kind of an abrasive, liberated kind of a woman. And she used foul language, and in that community, their women don't talk like that. They may be ranchers and farmers and miners, but they don't expect to hear that kind of thing... Basically, she tended to be domineering, demanding and "I the government." "You must do this because I represent the government." She was very condescending to the people, and generally they felt that she was looking down her nose at them.

In another instance:

[One community] has a luncheon counter. That's it. If you want to eat out, you go there; it's a little diner. And it was run by this woman and her husband, and evidently this program officer didn't feel that she was being served properly, and started yelling at the woman about sexism; about how she was waiting on all the men first; and she not only yelled at the woman, but went back in the kitchen and lectured her husband. That left a lot of bad feelings. Not only in the schools themselves, but in the communities.

Another program officer concluded more generally that:

With [two] exception[s], there was no one [among the program officers] who ever really knew rural America. There was an outpouring of feeling, a sincerity of interest; there was even a high degree of romanticism; but I don't think these people understood the environment and mores of the communities. They were just out of the mainstream.

The Uninvolved and Non-Directive Style

By carefully selecting only a few aspects of the advisory role, program officers could sometimes remain both uninvolved and non-directive. Elements of this style are reflected in one program officer's comments:

I never tried to force a district to do anything. I figured that if we can't talk about it and work out the directions between us, it probably shouldn't be done (whatever it is) because it's their district anyway.

Another elaborated:

This is a design that's locally initiated, and I consequently do not like to put extraordinary amounts of pressure on them from Washington. I don't like the idea of Experimental Schools sort of seeming to be an imposed project and to bat them over the head with it. I think that's self-defeating, and I think it also interrupts the research design that we are theoretically trying to test.

In at least one case, this style was carried to its logical extreme, reported by a program officer who didn't like it:

There was another style, which was to simply do nothing. The practitioner of that style has now left the office. And that is just as bad, in my estimation, as the strong interventionist. Because in the one site where this was the case, that site was not visited for a year; and the reports weren't read; and they weren't critiqued; and we had absolutely no understanding of what was going on at that site. As a result now, in my estimation, that project is nothing. I don't even think there is a project.

VARIATIONS IN THE USE OF STYLES

Particular program officers were closely identified with one or another performance style. But the style used also depended upon a number of conditions other than personal inclination including: (1) the persons in the district with whom the program officer was working, (2) the program officer's expertise, (3) the type of community, (4) the changing political context of the federal program, (5) support within the federal bureaucracy, and (6) the type of legal relationship.

The People Involved

There are also indications that the officer's style depended upon the issues and the local people with whom he or she was working. For example, one program officer reported that when the issue concerned a district-wide component, she tended to be more directive with the school principals than with the superintendents, because they were used to taking directions (from the central administration) about district-wide matters. However, she was less directive with the same principals when the issue was specific to the school, where they were used to some autonomy. The relationship then became more collegial because the principals felt more self-confident in these matters.

The weakness is that a lot of those communities knew the right words, knew the right way to put it all on a piece of paper, but they had no idea (even if they believed in it) of, say how you develop a curriculum. You don't do it in the summer, you don't do it overnight, you don't do it in a workshop, you don't do it over a weekend. That may be a three to five year process, and I'm not talking about the whole curriculum--a piece or a subject area or a grade level.

Someone else, a program officer with extensive experience in contract management, adds:

Basically, the systems themselves didn't have any facility, or expertise, for pricing. With possibly two or three exceptions their books are kept by women with open ledgers. Some of them are little old ladies; some of them are young girls. They don't have any sophistication whatsoever. They keep their books by object line, often for entire districts. Most of them felt they were terribly put upon.

This individual blames the legal structure in public education for this situation:

I think it's because they don't have to be accountable. Who are they accountable to? They all work for lay school boards who don't have any way of judging whether they are getting more or less education for their dollar. They certainly don't have to be responsible to the general public, the taxpayer. How do they know what's happening? They elect the board, right. The board doesn't have any way of judging. So who are they accountable to?

But lack of experience and expertise were only part of the problem. The plain fact is that the program officers and local officials were often suspicious of one another's motives and commitment to the project. During the early stages of the program, few program officers considered the local officials to be highly committed to comprehensive change (Appendix C, Item 17). The program officers probably had some reason to be suspicious. Federal officials often complain that local officials are interested in federal money, but not the programs (Pressman, 1975). Local officials tend to use ongoing projects as a means of financing new or recurring concerns that are only loosely related to the original plan. This lack of trust was an important factor in how the program officer chose to (or could) deal with the project. One officer, for example, felt compelled to keep a close watch on a project because that school district often would pretend to be implementing a reading program, for example, when it was actually using some of the money to repair the basketball court.

The Program Officer's Expertise

A program officer who felt particularly competent in an area might be more inclined to intervene:

The first time I saw any of the products, I was really taken back, because I thought they'd gotten bum advice from a consultant... So I discussed this with the superintendent and criticized much of what I saw in the way of the [materials] the teachers had developed. The superintendent went back with this consultant, reworked in-service and spent maybe the last year in trying to improve the quality of those things. I think they're making some progress... I suppose that if I had never had any experience with [this material] myself, I wouldn't have known a good one from a bad one.

Sophistication and Values of the Community

Some program officers said that they deliberately used different styles with different types of communities. Several factors were involved. One was the community's prior experience with federal agencies:

The fact that came out very strongly was how much relationship the districts had had with the federal government before and how they felt about it. It seemed to absolutely color relationships from the beginning, and a lot of times that was the major thing to change or to work with.

Another person elaborated:

That's something that's really different about my experiences with the rural districts as compared to working with the street academies, for example. For the street academies...know that whatever I say is only suggestion, and half of what I do say they discount anyway, I think. They're urbanized, and they're used to dealing with the federal government. A lot of the rural people really aren't. There's a constant fear out there, I think, that I control the budget, that I control their money, and therefore, that they've got to pay attention.

He adds that:

Some rural communities also are more sophisticated than others about the government. I have one project in the North, one in sort of mid-America and one in the far South, and the degree of sophistication rises the further north you get. [The northern community] is just a much easier place to deal with, because there aren't so many other agendas going on, it seems. We can speak much more plainly. They can say no, flat out and not worry about it. In [the southern community], on the other hand, just about everything I say, they try to do something about.

Another program officer concurs:

Each site is different in the way you go in and the way you work. I don't think I'd try to be nearly as strong in _____ as I am in _____. In [the latter community], they'll challenge you more. That's good. I enjoy that... In [the other community] you don't always know whether they've thought it through, or are only doing it because you seem to want it...

Another factor was the program officer's sensitivity to the local value system. Some communities seemed to take more pride in their small size and rural traditions than others. Some of the Westerners, in particular, seemed especially suspicious of the "bureaucrats from the East" (see Messerschmidt, 1977). In some instances, local officials were more resentful toward what they regarded as the federal officer's abrasive, condescending, or insulting attitudes than specific disputes that arose over money or procedures.

Another important factor affecting performance style is the assumptions the program officer made about the community's expertise. In the absence of a clear sense of what "comprehensiveness" meant, for example, local officials were forced to assume the burden of defining their project as they put it into operation. When a community did not have planning specialists who were prepared for this responsibility, the program officers became more directive in trying to fill the void. Nor did they believe that most local administrators involved were well qualified to direct a comprehensive change effort (Appendix C, Item 18). Even during the later implementation stage, in less than half of the observations made by program officers do they fully agree that local people are either committed or qualified to undertake it. And typically they are divided about whether local people agree on objectives and procedures (Appendix C, Items 15 and 16).

One source lamented:

They may have some ideas...but...they just don't know how to get them out on a table, gain consensus, and put them down in objective form; [or how to] develop activities to accomplish them, and to work out a budget to deal with them.

One program officer expressed her suspicion that:

The federal money to most school systems is the goal, OK? They write in and get their money, and they take it and they do what they want, and nobody ever holds them accountable and nobody ever comes in and checks to see if they spent it well or badly or whatever.

Another made demands on a local project for documentation because of his lack of trust:

For the most part [we have to assume] that the potential is high that everybody may burn us, and we better safeguard against that rather than the reverse.

One source elaborated:

...The superintendents come into the projects with different reasons than we attribute to them. Because, we are operating from this end and they're operating from that end, and consequently what they see is their needs. What they see as legitimate and moral and ethical ways to spend money may not coincide with ours, and may not coincide with our legal ways.

Some of this mistrust was apparently reciprocated by local officials, who it seems may have had reason to doubt federal officers. One person who was interviewed laments:

At the moment, there is almost no reason for the local community to trust the federal government. They're confused about our inclinations; they're confused about our staff assignments; they're confused about our organization; they're confused about personnel; they're confused about direction. We present a chaotic picture.

As Etzioni (1961) has stressed, the members' level of involvement in a program will influence the type of control exercised. If they are morally and emotionally committed to the program objectives, a non-directive and involved style may work effectively. On the other hand, if they are hostile, or alienated from the program, the program officer will probably be more inclined to use, say, a highly directive and uninvolved style. But in many cases the local officials are simply being calculative, that is, participating in the program for the financial and other benefits to be derived. In this case the program officer will feel compelled to exercise close surveillance (involvement) over the contract and to become very directive in order to protect the agency's interest.

The Political Context

There seems to be little doubt that the program officer's choice of performance styles was responsive to changes in the prevailing political climate in Washington. A transfer of the Experimental Schools program from the Office of Education (OE) to the National Institute of Education (NIE) proved to be rather traumatic. It inevitably introduced pressures on the program officers to adopt a particular style of project monitoring. The new agency was required to assume existing OE programs, which left it with little discretionary money to initiate its own new programs (Herriott, 1977). Experimental Schools became defined as an "old OE" program. The significance of this development can be better appreciated when it is recognized that NIE was created because Congress was convinced that OE had failed to fulfill its research function (Summerfield, 1974).

The effect of the transfer was twofold: (a) it intensified competition for discretionary funds, which middle-level bureaucrats prize as a source of power; and (b) it centralized decisions about ES, thus reducing the ES director's discretion and subjecting the program to higher level political pressures. (Corwin and Nagi, 1972; Summerfield, 1974). The first ES director was personally inclined to defy the bureaucracy (see also Sproull, Weiner, and Wolf, 1975, Chapter 6, pp. 4-5). But that was at best a short-term strategy. For, as a new, middle-level bureaucrat with little prior government experience, he had not yet cultivated a clientele through this program. Therefore, the most viable route to the power required to accomplish his objectives was to satisfy the interests of his superiors. This meant adjusting to severe pressures to accommodate this program to the NIE research priorities and demonstrating that research rigor and fiscal accountability could be brought to the program. OE is an old-time service agency; NIE is a new and vulnerable agency seeking stature through its research programs. The first NIE director was very critical of the lack of experimental rigor in the ES program. The research component appeared to be secondary to the heavy social action mission of the program. It was acknowledged, in fact, "from the participant's perspective [ES] is primarily a problematic social action rather than a research effort" (Budding, 1972). The difference that the local districts and NIE attached to the research and social action priorities was bound to be a fundamental source of tension and confusion.

There were also concerns about the loose fiscal accountability implicit in the "no strings" guaranteed grants that OE was perceived to have given to the districts. In view of the relatively large size of this program within the total NIE budget, and management's skepticism, it is understandable that the NIE management could see better uses for the funds.

One program officer conjectured that, "There isn't anyone in the structure of HEW, OE, or [NIE] who wants to believe the Experimental Schools' people know what they're doing." The Experimental Schools' managers were obliged to prove otherwise and to demonstrate that their program could be a credit to NIE. In retrospect, perhaps, they exaggerated, even contrived, the "research" aspect of the program. One program officer stated emphatically, "No one has believed in the research design from the beginning. When I say no one, I mean no one."

The Experimental Schools director was, one source observed, now compelled to "prove to somebody that he is being rigorous."

At least one respondent felt that NIE was deliberately attempting to destroy the program:

NIE imposed additional restrictions on the program, in an effort to kill it, which the first program director then passed on to local projects in an effort to save it. For example, there were a number of requirements that the local projects essentially should be able to "demonstrate an impact" which was not understood in the beginning.

Consequently, it appears that the director became more suspicious and demanding of local projects and more directive in his relationships with them. He challenged his staff to uncover potential problems to head off possibly criticisms, and they in turn became aggressive toward local officials. In this process, the Experimental Schools director reportedly became hostile towards officials in several communities, humiliating them on more than one occasion when he perceived that they were not fulfilling their obligations to the program. Firestone (1977) reports that:

At one point, the first director's abrasive questioning of the school board member about technical jargon buried in the district's plan reduced her to tears. After that day, the superintendent and the counselor sat up most of the night trying to revise the plan (p. 23).

The first ES director was forced to reinterpret the original guidelines and maintain close surveillance over the local projects to assure outcomes that would justify the program. He describes the bind in which he found himself:

The early arguments were...give the money to the communities. That's it. And if they burn it, or blow it, have a big party, or whatever they do, it's their money. However I think it's fair to say that in 1970 the emphasis of the federal bureaucracy was on carrying out some explicit program...not being creative... Be sure that you're successful... You go into it with the idea that it was experimental, but that's a concept that I'm learning is impossible to sell to an elected official, who must go back afterwards to his constituents after his second year and say, "Yes, I didn't waste any money." And somebody says, "Well, what about the \$600,000 that they blew in _____?... What did they do with that money?"... So, the idea of "experiment" was ludicrous. The experiment was only that by the time [the community] got through all the hurdles to get the money, the experiment was going to be successful; that was the last criteria. That's why you were funded, because you would look like a winner, and not (which I think is more correct) if you get one out of ten winners, that's not bad.

When the program officers were directive, it was often because they themselves were being supervised this way. Speaking of the first ES director, one officer observed:

He was viewed as a person who felt that it was important that these projects succeed, and you had to have either some answers or explanations, or at least a thought about what the difficulties were in the projects and how you could help them overcome them; or how, or what types of things could be done to get them to overcome some of these difficulties and move forward.

When asked whether the program officers at that time agreed with this style, or instead just went along because of the pressure, one replied:

Well, they never fully agreed with it... Program officers were pretty much straightforward with the districts, except when they were directly told, "This is going to be your agenda when you get on site." Then, there was no way to avoid it without being in-subordinate.

But the director was backed into a corner. For, it was not possible to lean on the communities for long without trespassing on local control and provoking the wrath of local school boards.

Perhaps partly because of the complaints from local officials in several communities, in December 1974 the original director was replaced. The new director was less directive with the program officers, allowing them more autonomy to adopt the style that was most comfortable to them personally. To the extent that some program officers had been forced to be directive in order to satisfy the administration's anxiety about project failures, they were now free to become less directive. One program officer summarizes:

But I think after [the original director] left, the period of transition took place. The program officers were left by themselves. [redacted] was acting director, but he was pretty loose. It was [the program officers'] project; they had to see the thing through and they couldn't expect a whole lot of direction from their superior. So yes, I would say the transition period occurred after his departure.

Economy, Congressional and Administrative Support

Political machinations and personalities aside, however, there was another, perhaps overriding factor, which affected the program officer's behavior. The technical assistance and advisory roles are labor intensive. To do a good job the program officers had to concentrate on relatively few projects, which was costly, in terms of the staff needed and travel money required for frequent site visits. For a combination of reasons, there was not sufficient administrative support. There was a drastic reduction in the travel budgets, and program officers were not replaced when vacancies occurred. Within one (several month) period, the number of program officers declined significantly.

While most program officers at first felt they had received adequate support from the ES/Washington office, in the later stages they more typically report only inconsistent backing.

One lamented:

The government has a strange way of saying, "Do something and do it well, particularly do it with quality. But we're going to have to reduce the staff, and we're going to have to reduce a lot of things.

Another source comments:

I think the bureaucracy is such that...this problem [to provide staff for technical assistance] is not going to receive any attention. It's not going to be discussed at any levels that will effect the kind of change that we'd have to have to make it fit. Now it's almost idiosyncratic, a group of us who are probably at the lowest echelon of any of them; people who are out there in the field. And, the people who make all the decisions, you see, all they have to do is cut you down on your travel and you're dead. There isn't any way to carry that out effectively, if you can't get on site.

The argument has been, and still is, that it costs too much money to operate that way. But I think that's penny wise and pound foolish... You spend fifty-five million dollars on a program and then not put the support behind it that it requires to get good clean data. I think it's ridiculous.

Type of Legal Relationship

The legal instrument used to award funds also seemed to affect style. As one program officer explained:

...there is an important difference between contracts and grants, in that you have more leverage with contracts. That is, contracts spell out pretty closely what these people are going to do by such and such a time, and if they're not delivering, then you can step in and call it to their attention. With grants (basically what is called a "donative award" or gift), you can only probe up to a certain point. If they choose to ignore you, they can. So that right from the start, I think the program officer has to understand that you have certain legal limitations, and know what those are.

This difference, in fact, was believed to be so important that the program was converted from grants to contracts when it was transferred from OE to NIE. An ES specialist in fiscal matters explained:

...Generally speaking, you get very low fiscal accountability with a grant. You can't control them... So if I went to them and said, "Where am I on spending on this grant?" all they could do was tell me, as of the end of the last quarter, which was two and a half months ago, what that grantee had actually dispersed--not obligated, but dispersed, which means actually written a check for. So I had no idea where anybody stood, and I had no idea what they were spending the money on. I just knew that they were spending money. And that really wasn't very satisfactory... They [NIE] just didn't have any grant documents that allowed me to put any restrictions on the sites that I wanted to, so we changed them all over to contracts... So it changed the role of the program officer, in the sense that he could control the program more under a contract than a grant. It gave him a greater legal way to insure that the contractor delivered what he said he was going to.

However, the Washington contract officers and the local school administrators had very different conceptions of the role of the Formal Project Plans, which served as the basis of the contracts. The contract officers thought they were purchasing "deliverables" described in the plans; but, to many school administrators, the formal plans represented only the first step towards a desirable goal, and as such they could be altered at their discretion as implementation proceeded.

This difference of opinion put the program officers in the middle. The managerial role is more compatible with contracts than with the grant review mechanism, but they were nonetheless convinced that their advice and technical assistance were needed more than managerial supervision.

SUMMARY

This chapter identifies and illustrates four types of performance styles based on the priority program officers gave to each role described in Chapter Two. These styles are differentiated by the extent to which the program officer becomes involved in the local project and her/his directiveness in dealing with project personnel.

For example, a program officer's directiveness, and in some instances that person's inclination to intervene, seemed to increase where:

- the program officer felt particularly competent in a substantive area of relevance to the local project;
- the program officer worked with school principals on district-wide matters;
- local community officials had prior unfavorable experience with federal agencies, did not themselves have local expertise and/or did not seem to be committed to the project;
- the community's values were alien to the program officer's own experience;
- the federal agency responsible for the local projects was being closely scrutinized and held responsible for rigorous contract management;
- there was little backing for federal assistance from the federal bureaucracy;
- projects operated under contractual agreements.

With these performance styles in mind, we are ready to consider some consequences of each style, including some of the conditions that seemed to affect the style which a program officer chose to use. This is the topic of the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR. TYPES OF FEDERAL IMPACT: SOME SELECTED EXAMPLES

What are the consequences of each of these diverse roles and performance styles on the local projects and on the program officers? It was not possible to obtain enough information, within the scope of this study, to arrive at a conclusive answer about the amount of impact from each role and performance style. However, the program officers provided some crude estimates (see Appendix C), and it is possible at least to illustrate various types of impact that occurred.¹

In combination, the ten program officers estimated that they exerted a major perceptible influence on the ten projects a total of 73 times (at various stages of the program). They also estimated that in an equal number of cases they exerted a minor but still perceptible influence, and, there were perhaps another 50 times when they thought they might have had a subtle or almost imperceptible influence. This means that on the average, a site might have been subject to 20 different influences from program officers, although of course, some sites received more influence than others.

More influence was reported on operating procedures than on conceptual design (a ratio of 2:1). Procedures become more subject to influence as the projects become operational, and the minor and subtle forms of influence increase from one project stage to another. Project design was more subject to perceptible influence during the planning period than during the early or latter stages, but some influence--both perceptible and subtle--continued during the implementation period.

As the program has matured, program officers have become more convinced that this relationship with local school administrators has become productive for the administrators (Appendix C, Item 27). However, the program officers would like to have had even more influence both at the planning stage and in the implementation of the projects.

Any of the roles and work styles described can have an impact. As one program officer observed:

It's a myth that the program officer isn't going to have some effect on a project. I don't give a damn how; he's going to have an effect. He's a representative of the federal government. By God, he's going to be an important person when he walks on site, and there's no way to get around that. And how that project views him makes a hell of a lot of difference in how it behaves.

One program officer estimated that she had succeeded in getting local projects to change about one-fourth of the items that she had questioned. Her influence:

. . . took the form of putting absolute stops on the plan; questioning other things [requiring] involvement of groups in the community; [and making] suggestions in governance; . . . and personnel selection [specific individuals].

VIEWS OF SOME LOCAL PROJECT DIRECTORS

Current and former local project directors who were contacted, representing eight of the ten school districts, expressed widely divergent opinions about their program officers. Their views differed according to the particular program officer under discussion, but they also reflected the unique history of each project. The following selection of statements provides a good sense of their feelings.

Director A: This was the best-run program that I have encountered in 41 years of administration. [The program officers] were apt, capable, understanding and helpful. . . . They provided some expertise that the community needed.

Director B: [One program officer] was dedicated and competent. She would answer questions and come out to help. . . . By contrast, [another program officer] would not communicate through the superintendent, but instead worked directly with the board. . . . This raised questions in the board's minds about my competence. [Another program officer] did not know his place. . . . He only complained a lot. He considered himself to be an authority on everything, and was very opinionated. He didn't contribute anything.

Director C: [One program officer] tried too much to determine what the program should be. . . . [She] pressured the community to push community schools. . . . She was very directive, both about content and procedure, and she turned off people However, she did know her job from a technical point of view. . . . In the final analysis, she did not have very much influence on the program, because it happened that we had our own ideas. However, she could have had a big impact had she been working with another community.

[Another program officer] was easy-going and not pushy, but he did not have the field experience either in schools, or in Washington. He was too theoretical, and consequently, not credible. . . . He would take it upon himself to talk to people in the community and try to turn them against the school district. [The program officer] was very directive and would not compromise. He was primarily watching out for the federal dollar, but he was very hard to deal with.

Director D: [One program officer] related to the community more as a consultant than as a program officer. He would give advice directly to the school board and staff members and attempted to influence school board decisions without going through the superintendent. He would even have individual meetings with school board members without me or my staff present. My leaving the district was a direct result of his impact.

By contrast, [another program officer] was much more helpful. She asked what the school district wanted to do, and then tried to suggest some options, without advocating any particular one.

[Another program officer] was very dogmatic and enforced the contract too literally. And, more important, she was too insistent on incorporating her own ideas, to the point where it limited the districts' options.

Director E: Our experience with the first program officer was bad. Part of the problem stemmed from her arrogance, but in addition, she kept insisting that we rewrite the entire proposal. And, when we tried to make the changes she suggested, they were rejected by ES.

Then [another program officer] took over and raised specific questions and then got the proposal adopted. She was always available and provided written answers to letters.

He [a third program officer] made an effort to attend our workshops and visited us to show an interest in our problems. He helped with our reports and showed us how to retain the money that we underspent. He made good suggestions about specific implementation problems we were having, but did not dictate.

Director F: Program officers have given little actual direction to the project, and have had little influence, largely because of minimal contact between the program officers and the school district. There has been a great deal of variation in the helpfulness of program officers assigned over the years. My main complaint is that things agreed to in discussions were never confirmed in writing from Washington.

Director G: The program officers who have worked with this program have been very helpful. In 20 years' experience, no federal program has been as far in the background. But when they were needed, [the program officers] were ready to help. The major problem has been the rapid turnover of both program officers and directors.

Director H: There has been considerable variation in my experience with program officers. One created a great deal of animosity and strife in the first part of the project because she is a rigid person. She did not understand the problems of administering a school district; and consequently, she had no idea how unrealistic her demands were.

But [another program officer] has been helpful and supportive, and has helped resolve problems that have come up. He has provided technical assistance upon request. And he would sometimes offer it when not requested; however, the final decision as to whether to accept technical assistance was in the hands of the school district.

In general, the program officers did not influence the direction of the project, but they did help to keep it going by encouraging the school district not to withdraw from the program.

IMPACT ON LOCAL PROJECTS: SOME ILLUSTRATIONS OF EACH STYLE

Several examples will be given to illustrate the effects of each of the work styles identified in the preceding discussion (see also Appendix B).

The Uninvolved and Directive Style

When using this style, program officers often fell back on their managerial authority, although even this was subject to negotiation. One describes some of the tension that accompanies this role:

I had said to [the superintendent] that I thought the project consultant should not be the project director for this year on the grounds that this man's greatest effect is in the classroom. . . . But I find out now that he has, in fact, appointed the project consultant as project director. Now I have a dilemma, since this is an appointment over which I have rights of approval or denial. . . . I was reluctant to get into a power play, because I feel that would be a definite intrusion. . . in the research design. I think I've decided that the building principals will function as the administrative personnel on a quarterly basis, and the administrative chairman of their meetings will be the project director, which is some sort of compromise between the superintendent and myself.

In some instances, program officers were directly responsible for the removal of local project directors during the planning period. The superintendent of schools in one of these districts reportedly was very resentful of the fact that refunding was made contingent upon replacing the director, whom the program officer felt did not have the skills necessary to manage the project. In still another project ES/Washington insisted that a project director who had tried to use project funds to finance his personal schooling should be replaced.

Program officers also intervened in program design:

We said, "Look, if you're going to be doing that at the elementary level, then you can't initiate it unless you're going to plan to do something with it all the way through." . . . They didn't often want to do that.

Many of the criticisms of local projects in the early phases of the program concerned the absence of a central project theme, poor integration among project components, vague plans, unrealistic timetables, and the need to involve more people in the planning. There is less evidence that program officers were pushing particular programs. But this style was not confined to contract management. Program officers also sometimes adopted this style when serving as project advisors.

I've been particularly cool about their approach to the bilingual education program, and have told them, in fact, that I thought they were not being faithful to what they had agreed to do. . . . [I] pointed out to them that if they couldn't come up with some kind of program that there was some question if they could be eligible for refunding. That's real pressure. I mean that's really slugging them pretty hard.

Another program officer said that she . . .

might really object to a [component]. For instance, "field trips are no big deal," we would say, "unless you can show me programmatically how a few field trips were ever going to do anything for any kid."

Messerschmidt (1977) describes an incident in which ES refused to allow the school district to appoint a separate project director, insisting that only the superintendent of schools could act in that capacity. He notes that:

Such changes in the organization of the school district, however, was equally unacceptable to the school officials. Administrators and trustees alike resented this outside advice, which appeared to totally disregard district administrative policy and established lines of authority. The ES stand on the directorship issue was interpreted by some local individuals as a gross violation of the school district's autonomy (p. 25).

In still another instance, a program officer insisted that a community being funded should establish a relationship with a neighboring community, when in fact there was a long history of rivalry and antagonism between the two communities involved.

The Involved and Directive Style

Often, the program officer became cognizant of some problem in the course of providing technical assistance or when serving in an advisory capacity. In one instance, a program officer had become concerned about the fact that the project had not yet implemented its evaluation plan. He tried to nudge the local project director gently to see implementation as a priority of the project, and to look for that skill when interviewing people to be hired. He also recommended the type of people who should be considered and was present during some of the interviews to explain the problem to the candidates.

Another program officer reports that:

. . . [T]hey hired a woman to head the [local evaluation], and I went out there and realized that she was very insecure in her role. So, I had a meeting with the superintendent and this person, in which I was attempting to explore with her what her job was all about. And the superintendent exploded. "No, she is working for me, not you." He wanted her to report directly to him and not to us. . . . She later said that she was glad that I had intervened when I did.

Criticisms from program officers sometimes proved to be irritating to local officials: Donnelly (1977) comments:

[School district] personnel. . . concluded that ES/Washington was criticizing the plan as being overambitious. Such criticism, through written and telephone communications, seemed to be an indication of prejudice against the capabilities of the rural school system; local pride was challenged (p. 19).

At another site, the program officer made harsh and uncomplimentary comments about the local plan charging that it was platitudinous and filled with contradictions. As a result of her criticisms, the superintendent complained to ES that:

40 percent of the work that went into preparing the document was spent simply to make it acceptable to NIE and not for the district's benefit. The problem with this type of "help" is that with the departure of the individuals who wrote the project plan, few local personnel are willing to assume responsibility for the ownership of the program; it becomes "just another federal [as opposed to local] program."

The Involved and Non-Directive Style

This style was sometimes used in the course of technical assistance as in the instance when the program officer sat down with the project director and worked out the idea of an administrative council to make the overall decisions for the project as a way of maintaining continuity in the face of high turmoil. This style was also associated with the advisory role:

Their . . . internal evaluation component was handled by a single individual. I encouraged them to go to a sort of team approach to evaluation, training and using teachers within the system on that team. . . . Evaluation became less threatening to the teachers, [and] they built up skills within several people in the district.

Even criticism, it seems, could be given in a non-directive way by someone who was accepted as "a friend in court", as he described himself:

Frankly, I thought they were pulling the wool over their own eyes. I didn't think they had a community action plan at all. . . . They had a highly selective group of people. . . . But they hadn't invited the people at all who would have said anything different. . . . And I pointed that out. . . . Well, they were very angry--not angry--they were vociferous in their protestations. I said, "fine, and I've been wrong before, but just bear in mind that that's what it looks like to me." So, after I left and they cooled down a little bit and looked it over, they reported what I had said to the cabinet (which is made up of the school board and some other people) and the cabinet said, "Well, we think he's right." . . . So they went to work on it, and they've made some rather interesting changes.

He went on to explain that:

Hell, it's their project. They're the ones who are essentially the contractors. They're the ones who have to deliver the goods. The best I can do is offer my help. And, if in the last resort, they still think I'm wrong, I may submit to them some letter of understanding of our discussion at that particular time, so I go on record as having at least pointed out that this is an area that's very unclear. And then they go ahead. I can't usurp that authority. I wouldn't if I could. I don't think the federal government has any right to tell the contractor he's wrong.

The consequences that can accrue from even a very non-directive style once a program officer has become intimately familiar with the project are illustrated in the case of a program officer who pointed out to members of the school board that their system, with 100 classroom teachers, had approximately 30 to 38 coaches--in other words, a third of the system or a third of the personnel; and that they spent over one-third of their budget on athletic programs, including equipment. Many of the board members were not aware of that, and eventually, the local superintendent got into trouble when it was learned that he was spending so much money on one activity. The budgeting procedure required by ES also revealed that he was spending funds given for one component on another.

The Uninvolved and Non-Directive Style

Even a program officer who was not intimately familiar with the details of a project or community, and had no definite criticism or alternative in mind, could affect the course of a project by raising basic questions or pushing for a rationale and justification:

They said that one of their goals was to improve the art and cultural offerings. It was having a poet come and attend school twice a year. A: What is its cost? And B: What is its impact? Raising the question itself [was important]; "Why did you do that, over and above six other things?" "Who decided that that was what the children of [this district] needed?"

In another instance:

Well, in _____, for instance they wanted to do something they called "personalized education". The things they wrote were full of lingo. And I did a lot of questioning about what they meant and whether, in fact, it was different from regular educational procedures, and in what way. And, if they were going to personalize for every kid, had they actually thought about the details of keeping records on every kid? And how would teachers be trained to do that? And where would it be coordinated? It was their idea, and I just tried to work it through.

In another instance, ES/Washington worked out a plan for a local project to hire a resident consultant. The program officer explained how the agency was, indirectly, able to maintain some control over the situation:

Well, the superintendent originally wanted him under his control, to be paid directly out of project funds. But we felt that might be a mistake in a couple of ways, in that, that kind of thing could really hamper the guy's ability to move if he did anything that anybody there was in disagreement with. So instead of that (and I actually did all the setting up and working out details), we set it up so the project would pay [a university]. He would be an employee of [the university], and he would be hired on a contract basis to work in the district full time. This accomplished a couple of things. One, he had the prestige of coming from the university, which means something. It really does mean something in [that community]. And [two], if there was a flare-up, if there was a disagreement, the guy was protected because he was actually employed by the university.

Speaking of this instance, one source concludes:

That's federal imposition. That's federal intervention. And yet there isn't any question in my mind that there would be nothing going on. . . if I hadn't gotten this non-threatening, highly competent man to be an adjunct professor in the sense of assuming the kind of leadership that nobody else would offer.

This style took several different forms. In one instance, a program officer simply "came in with some packaged evaluation plans that he suggested the community adopt, but the community made the decision independently." In another case:

[ES]required an outside audit done by a private firm. That's impact, on how things are done locally. . . Some people got fired. Some people got their jobs shifted. School board members got voted off. Teachers quit, etc. Components were dropped. Some were going to have to go without equipment, or be replaced.

The above example also reveals the way styles were sometimes mixed. In this case, the agency insisted upon the audit, but was otherwise non-directive about the outcomes: "Let the chips fall where they may."

Perhaps a more typical example of how program officers used directive methods to achieve indefinite results occurred when program officers pressured local projects to hire outside consultants chosen or approved by NIE. One program officer, for example, reportedly selected and briefed a consultant paid by the local school district who helped write the formal project plan for the district.

While we have been considering each style in isolation from the others, many of the problems arose because different styles were being used at different times. Thus, several of the on-site observers in different communities independently report that tension developed between local officials and NIE personnel as the communities realized that they were not to be given the freedom and autonomy that they had been led to expect. Each project was to be developed and designed by persons in the local site based on local conditions and local desires for schooling. However, although the Washington office had intended to remain as non-directive as possible with regard to the planning and implementation of activities of the local school systems, this strategy also presented the problem Donnelly (1977) reports:

[The program officer . . .] always refrained from offering direct suggestions as to what changes would be necessary for the proposal to be acceptable for funding. . . the subtle suggestions offered [but never clarified] were enough to produce a condition of anxiety. . . [Then] following the submission of the "final" version of the proposal to NIE in mid-February, [the program officer] visited [the community] to inform the local project staff that a "complete rewrite" would be necessary due to the lack of specificity and organization of that document. By this time, the superintendent and the project coordinator had become convinced that [ES] was trying to force the proposal into a framework which was not compatible with the original objectives of the Letter of Interest (pp. 19-20).

Firestone (1977) independently reports from another school district that:

The superintendent remembers dealing with ES/Washington as . . . a very frustrating thing; to say that we have no guidelines and yet to be evaluated on a sub rosa set of guidelines that we didn't know but we found out later they were evaluating on. . . If they'd just told us that to begin with, it would have been a lot easier than to try to outguess them all the time and wondering if we were getting the right things in. So what was supposed to be a proposal based on our ideas was instead a proposal based upon what they wanted. . . The thing that really bothered me was that we were playing games with each other, rather than just having them say we've got to have this because Congress has said this. . . Why not just tell us that (pp. 16-17)?

To understand these vacillations it is necessary to realize that:

- ES/Washington initially was probably more concerned about assessing a community's suitability for the program than in conveying details about monitoring procedures to be followed at each project stage; such details might have only discouraged local officials;
- ES/Washington was in charge of the selection process; local officials were not in a secure position to demand details about the guidelines ES would follow;
- The ES/Washington staff themselves probably did not yet have sufficient experience to stipulate detailed monitoring guidelines; these would evolve over time;
- With the shift from USOE to NIE, the ES staff was put under sudden pressure to tighten up the monitoring process.

FAILURES OF INFLUENCE ATTEMPTS

However, it would be a mistake to assume that program officers were uniformly successful whenever they tried to exert influence on a project. A number of instances were reported when local officials either (a) rejected the government's recommendations, or (b) implemented only part of them.

Rejections of Recommendations

In one case, the program officer backed off when he learned the community would resist a plan involving a cultural exchange with a minority group,

I felt that. . . I would work on positive things rather than create a confrontation. . . that's the only case that I felt that I was really totally unsuccessful, and I just didn't pursue it because I knew it wouldn't work.

In another instance, a program officer's suggestion to release a teacher part time to direct the local evaluation effort was not accepted because the superintendent preferred a full-time person from outside the district and did not want to disrupt this teacher's career with a temporary assignment.

In at least one instance, in fact, local officials apparently succeeded in getting a program officer dismissed because of their objections to the condescending way the program officer had treated local people.

One interviewee explains an incident which developed when ES/Washington refused to allow a project to hire a new local evaluator after dismissing the first one:

He and the superintendent didn't get along, and for reasons that are not clear to me, they didn't rehire him the second year. Because they made that mistake, the front office

[ES managers] refused to let them use the money the next year to hire another evaluator. . . [The superintendent] had some pretty big guns, because he wrote his congressman, and senators, and the governor and everybody else. And so, letters came down from the top and filtered down to our office, and all hell broke loose. It was when [the NIE director] was under tremendous fire from Congress, . . . and it was just the wrong time for us to get that kind of publicity. And so, they removed the program officer which, of course, as far as I'm concerned, was the wrong thing to do.

Partial Implementation

However, it was probably more typical for communities to choose to implement only part of the government's recommendations. As one program officer sees it, all instances of "successful influence" that he could think of also could be looked upon as partial failures:

By having an aide come into the classroom an hour a day and work with some kids in Spanish, the district has now made a fairly . . . honest attempt to create one fully bilingual classroom at each grade level, in the elementary grades, up to grade five. Now, that's a success as far as I am concerned. But my idea was that they had really sort of told us that they were going to do that in every classroom . . . and they're three years into this project and they're finally, for the first time, designating one bilingual classroom. Now, have I succeeded or have I failed?

IMPACT ON PROGRAM OFFICERS

In addition to the impact that program officers had on communities, the diverse roles and performance styles they tried to employ also had consequences for themselves. Confusion sometimes resulted because they were trying to exercise so many diverse responsibilities. The program officers were typically not clear about their responsibilities during the planning stage, but this problem diminished once the project was under way (Appendix C, Item 20). After the first few months, they also were confident that local school administrators had developed closer agreement with their role definitions (Appendix C, Item 22), although there are still a substantial number of instances (5 out of 16 observations) in which program officers are still not sure how they are perceived by local officials. More important, after a period of optimism early in the program, the majority are unconvinced that administrators at NIE support their role definitions (Appendix C, Item 21).

In particular, it proved difficult to divorce the advice they offered in the form of suggestions from the fact that they controlled the funds. Several of them commented that they could sense the community often felt intimidated by their advice and listened only because of the program officer's control over the money. As one program officer commented:

I think I view the relationship a little differently than the superintendents would. I think that they're much more aware of the power I have than I am, and I think they're concerned about it. They think about it.

The inconsistent switching from role to role was sometimes perceived by local officials as insincere "game playing", an attitude of which the program officers were aware. Thus, some program officers looked upon it as a challenge to develop mutual trust and respect under the shadow of their own power. Toward this end, one mused:

My advice is always a form of suggestion. Usually I couch it that way in the beginning, but I realize it's not always taken that way. . . They propose something and they check it out with me to see what my facial expression is like; or they ask me, you know, "What do you think of this?" because they say, "If there's no point in doing it, I mean, we may as well not spend our time discussing the damn thing." Well, that is the power part of the relationship obviously operating right there, and in lots of respects it is hard to break down.

One program officer expressed personal frustration as follows:

I want not to interfere, I want it to be their project. But at the same time, I have a hard time keeping my mouth shut if I see something that I could directly help with. I don't think we've ever decided whether the responsibility of the program officer is to see to it that they don't fail. My inclination is that, "no, it is not our responsibility"--viewing this as a research project, as an experiment. But as an educator, it's hard not to get in there. I wish that had been more clearly spelled out for us in the beginning.

Another program officer stressed the problems that this combination of roles created for both her and the local community:

It may have been easier on the project to deal with it directly, "this is what we expect; this is what we want; do it; comply," rather than the . . . "well, if you want to do it that way, and if you can explain it, why sure." Because there was nothing clear cut about that kind of continual negotiations, and that could have actually been a source of greater frustration. In fact, a lot of projects were always saying, "Well, if you'd just tell us what it is, we'll do it." And of course, we didn't believe that we could; there weren't answers; we didn't have one set thing. . . We'd say, "Well, if we knew what was acceptable we wouldn't be spending x million dollars having their project. We'd just go out and write the model and then everybody would do it."

The program officers' ambivalence in the situation is also reflected in this comment:

It's not been possible for me to be of really much help to [that project]. I feel that they would not be too much worse off if they never heard from me, and if I just signed papers as they came in. Sometimes I feel that way. Other times I say to myself, if they didn't know that I was here thinking about them, there is just quite a strong force in that district to . . . not do anything. It's quite a strong feeling; that's the way they ought to behave. So that, just my presence is pretty important there.

There were also some unanticipated hazards from working too closely with the communities. One program officer recalled:

I've had to mediate disputes between well-intentioned people who have come to blows over a particular proposal . . . and if they come to me and say, "You know, this guy sleeps through staff meetings and just doesn't pick up the ball," I think that then I have to be very careful. I could say to them, "Yeah, I know, this guy is a fool" or whatever. . . . But if I do that, not only do I kill the guy, but it interjects a major variable, or influence, on the project that I shouldn't be.

Another program officer complained of his vulnerability to being coopted:

There is a danger, too, that you can be looked upon as "Johnny Nice Guy" or as "Our Man in Washington" as opposed to "Washington's Man in _____." So, the program officer has to avoid being sucked into being somebody else's man. The program officer has to very quickly establish his role and also put across the fact that he is, after all, a government employee who is attempting to make sure that the taxpayers' money is spent properly.

FACTORS RELATED TO THE AMOUNT OF IMPACT

It seems clear that the impact of program officers varied from time to time and from community to community. Some communities complained vociferously about federal intervention, while others were less resentful, or at least less vocal about it. Impact seemed to be contingent upon a number of different factors, including: (1) stage of the project; (2) continuity and persistence on the part of the federal agency; (3) instability of the program; (4) the ability of communities to defend themselves; (5) the vulnerability of particular communities.

Project Stage

The needs of the projects for different types of assistance shifted as they matured from selection to planning to implementation. In the early stages, as communities were designing their projects, they seemed to depend more upon the program officer for advice about the philosophic issues, or about the rationale underlying the design. In describing a colleague, one program officer identified several skills that seemed to be called for during this early stage:

First of all, she was very good at conceptual work, and that's what was required in planning. . . . She could go in and say, "No. This isn't what you really want to do." Or, "This isn't going to get you where you are going." She might not be able to tell them how to get there, but she was a critiquer. And she was a good one from what I could see. She also served some functions in helping them translate proposals into plans. . . . They had wonderful proposals, but we kept saying, "We want a plan." And they would say, "We can't plan for more than one year at a time."

But a different kind of assistance was required once the rationale was worked out:

It wasn't philosophy they needed; it was "how to." Once I decide that I want to change my system in this way, how do I do it?

According to their questionnaire responses (see Appendix C), the program officers seldom worried about contract management matters (i.e., keeping close surveillance or disapproving requests) during the

selection period. But from the planning period on, they typically report having taken steps toward contract compliance.

There was a similar change in emphasis on the advisory role. Program officers began to offer advice during the planning stage (Appendix C, Item 6). In three-fourths of the instances, they report having often or very frequently offered suggestions to local administrators regarding ways to implement their plans or resolve their problems.

But their advice was limited to implementation matters, not policy. They seldom claim to have been responsible for introducing a new project component (Appendix C, Item 11) and they doubt that they have had much influence on the conceptual design or project goals (Appendix C, Items 8, 9). They are uncertain, and somewhat divided among themselves, about whether they should have had even more influence on some aspects of local projects (Appendix C, Item 28).

Paralleling these developments, they report a dramatic increase in the frequency with which they were asked by administrators for technical assistance or advice. During the early stages few of them were solicited for assistance, but during the implementation period most of them were asked to provide technical assistance (Appendix C, Item 13) and nearly all of them said their help was solicited (Appendix C, Item 14). But significantly enough, starting in the planning stage, the majority also frequently offered advice whether or not it was requested (see Appendix C, Item 30).

The program officers could recall a total of 197 specific instances when they felt they had exercised some kind of influence (positive or negative) on a local project.² These incidents were divided approximately equally among major, minor and subtle influences. They affected operating procedures about twice as often as conceptual design. Two-thirds of the incidents occurred during the implementation period, and more occurred during planning than during selection. However, when only major incidents are considered, approximately two out of three occurred before the implementation period, an impact that undoubtedly affected implementation.

As the program evolved, too, the program officers became somewhat more convinced that local officials were committed to the program. Still, in the majority of instances, they remained very unimpressed with the level of local

commitment, and more important perhaps, they were even less impressed with the qualifications of local officials to direct projects of this magnitude.

Throughout the program, but especially during the planning period, the program officers did not feel that they had enough backing from the Experimental Schools administration, and they were uncertain whether ES officials had provided clear interpretations of federal procedures and expectations. The policy changes and inconsistencies that were prevalent during the planning period apparently became more stable during implementation. In most instances, program officers now believe that they understand their role, and ES officials agree with them, but during the selection and planning periods there was apparently much ambiguity. The program officers are still divided on whether local school district administrators have shared their own role definitions.

With a couple of exceptions, the program officers seem convinced that they have helped the local school administrators during the implementation period, although they did not feel that they were of much help during the earlier stages.

Federal Continuity and Persistence

One must also consider how much effort the agency was able and willing to expend to influence a project. The amount of effort that the Experimental Schools' staff devoted to intervention was in turn influenced by the staffing pattern. For some sites there was a high rate of turnover among program officers. Three sites were assigned four different program officers; four others had to deal with three different program officers and three other sites were assigned two program officers. Also, in some cases, there was no active program officer assigned for months at a time. During these periods, the project tended to get behind schedule, primarily because the usual delays in payments from Washington became prolonged without someone in Washington to oversee the paper work. It should be noted that many of these small communities did not have enough slack money to tide them over these delays and as a result the teachers and other personnel were kept waiting for their salaries. This intensified local resistance and reduced ES' ability to impact the project.

It has been noted that each program officer tended to stress his or her personal skills and interests. When this idiosyncratic pattern of monitoring is viewed against the swift and often abrupt turnover of personnel, interspersed with periods of neglect, it is evident that projects could be torn in several directions within a few months. The discontinuities were compounded by the fact that the original ES/Washington program director was replaced in midcourse by a sequence of acting directors, and at the same time the ES/Washington office was reviewed and reorganized. Under these conditions it would be natural for local officials simply to give up and withdraw expecting that "This too shall pass."

All of this probably would not have made much difference if the agency had not been so determined to work closely with local projects. Why was the agency so resolute in its commitment to assist these projects? Part of the answer is that its own reputation and sense of accomplishment depended upon their success. Once the agency had selected these specific communities, there were few options available to it due to the competition for discretionary funds going on within NIE at the time. For, if a project were dropped, in all likelihood ES would have lost those funds to other NIE programs.

Program Instability

Another important consideration is the fact that the ES program was never well defined, nor planned in any detail at the federal level, and its operational capability was never fully appraised before it was funded. It was, of course, reviewed by the administration's budgetary office, but OMB is primarily interested in the ideological and budgetary merits of such programs, not their operational plans (see Summerfield, 1974). Since the program was not enacted as part of a law, it even escaped review by HEW's Office of Legislation. It was authorized directly by Congressional budgetary committees, which seldom have the time, interest or capability to undertake a detailed review of the operational readiness of such a program (see Lowi, 1969). The several task forces that proposed it, debated the program's philosophy but arrived at neither a consensus nor a detailed plan.

Consequently, for example, criteria were never specified for even the key idea, "comprehensive" change. Since the program had been turned down once by Congress, as soon as it was funded its managers felt compelled to rush into operation to show results. Subsequent circumstances forced ES/Washington to adapt its policies as unforeseen circumstances arose. The policies just evolved.

Of course, there might have been some merit in not being too specific, given the program managers' ideological commitment to local initiative. The general nature of the guidelines certainly left room for the local school districts to negotiate their own preconceptions--had procedures been established to permit such negotiations to take place. The problem is that such procedures did not exist. The districts were thus torn between whatever arbitrary and fluctuating interpretations various federal officials might decide to impose at any time.

These changes in policy undermined the program officer's effectiveness with the local projects. Most program officers agree that policy changes made by the agency early in this program were a major factor. Moreover, while perhaps the situation has improved recently, apparently ES officials have never provided local school administrators with a clear understanding of government procedures and expectations (Appendix C, Item 26). One source observed that:

The administration, if anything, has been a debilitating influence on Experimental Schools. The sites have been keenly aware of what has happened in this past year. The largest cut that we planned to have to take was two million dollars, and we wound up having to take [almost that amount] 1.8 million dollars. . . . And I think these districts are relatively conscious of the attitude of the central management of [ES]. . . . They know that the bureaucracy. . . certainly isn't supporting sending the program officers out to the field. They know that [the ES director] was removed from the program. . . . I think they feel somewhat hurt at the lack of awareness that NIE has of what they're doing in their district.

He observed that the small districts are probably more adversely affected by erratic policy swings than are the larger ones:

The people at the bigger projects are much more sophisticated. The leadership [has] been around for years. They've been dealing with the feds for a long, long time. They don't get as rattled as the little fellows do. So it's more crucial with the little projects, because for many of them this was their first experience with a big federal agency, and it hasn't been pleasant, and that's too bad. . . . The instability of the thing--politically, I think,--has been tremendously devastating to the effort to provide stability in programs.

This kind of program instability is apparently commonplace in Washington. Pressman (1975) reports that local officials associated with various federal programs, change their priorities, renege on financial commitments, and yet hold locals responsible for properly administering their projects.

Community Defenses

The amount of impact was of course also a function of the other side of the equation: a community's ability and inclination to resist federal influence. Many instances of overt resistance from local officials were reported. A few informants were convinced that, at least in certain communities, there was little more than "surface [ritualistic] conformity" to the contract and to the government's expectations (Merton, 1957). That is, officials ritualistically fulfilled only the minimum requirements and thus only pretended to implement ES directives. For example, one program officer remarked that, insofar as evaluation was concerned, the school administrators were merely "play acting" to satisfy federal requirements.

Local officials employed several techniques to protect their autonomy. Most of these techniques enhanced their ability to control information available to program officers. For example, an on-site researcher at one site tells how a superintendent limited program officers' access to information during a site visit by managing their schedules. They spent all morning listening to the superintendent and his consultant describe the project and illustrate its success with selected examples. In the afternoon they were taken to one exemplary school where they were introduced to a few teachers who were involved with the most creative aspect of the project.

In one case, a superintendent was able to minimize the influence of community residents despite an ES requirement for community involvement in planning. The local project staff simply visited a few civic and fraternal organizations to solicit opinions which they used at their own discretion.

Most program officers believed they were adequately informed about the local projects (Appendix C, Item 29). Nevertheless, local management techniques were so effective that, reputedly, at one site a program officer was kept from learning, during his site visit, that the superintendent was being fired and had instituted legal proceedings against the school board. In still another instance, a program officer thought that a particular program was operating in the first five elementary grades when in fact it was available in only the kindergarten and first grades.

A few on-site researchers also sensed that limited access to information sometimes caused program officers to overestimate their influence on projects. One researcher, for example, questions whether a highly touted plan to hire local teachers as evaluators was supported by the teachers involved, who seemed rather uninterested in their new jobs.

In truth, no matter how much a program officer might have tried, he had little chance of influencing what was going on in classrooms if the teachers were not behind it. No one person, it seems--not even outside federal officers with enticing money--can combat the "slippage" that is characteristic of hierarchical systems. Relatively speaking, it is easy to achieve compliance on paper. New materials can be introduced from the top of an organization. However, because of increasing resistance at each lower level of the hierarchy, by the time programs get into classrooms, they have become transformed back into what had already existed. As Gouldner (1952) has observed, conforming to the letter of the rules can sabotage an organization because the social system can work only if members are sufficiently committed to exercise their own initiative to make it work. Directives can serve as guidelines to behavior, but they cannot establish the essential attitudes.

Community Vulnerability

Some communities had more power and inclination to resist than others. Several factors help to account for this variation. One program officer identified two reasons:

Of all the districts, I've probably had more influence in _____ than any of them. And I think that's a result of two things. One, they needed the most help. Two, they react the quickest to the federal government. They need the federal money badly for a number of reasons. The superintendent needs it for political survival, and the district needs it to

do anything above the minimum program. . . . The state has a minimum program outlined that all districts must give, and anything above that is up to the local school district. This is the kind of place that if they had to depend only on their local funds, they would only have a minimum program. Now they aspire to bigger and better things. They've been able to do it primarily because the superintendent's always been able to bring in federal dollars one way or another, and the biggest batch has been the Experimental Schools dollars. But the need for that makes them respond differently than _____. If [the latter] didn't like what we were doing, they'd tell us to "buzz off" and "we'll run our own show." But _____ isn't about to do that.

In addition to the need for help and money, another factor which explains variation in the inclination of communities to resist is the local political situation. Local officials are inclined to think carefully about how participation in federal programs might threaten their own position vis-a-vis the power structure of the local district (Pressman, 1975). One ES program officer comments that the superintendent ignored his recommendation to appoint a principal (rather than an outside consultant) as the project director because:

I think it's easier for the superintendent to be away for a year and know that the project is in the hands of somebody who's going to be a good caretaker (as well as being a creative leader), as opposed to entrusting it to people who have really had sort of untried administrative responsibilities. And, politically, I think, the fact that the project consultant is not from _____ [means that] he doesn't pose a political threat. I think it's possible that there are a couple, or three, building principals who might aspire to the superintendency.

It appears that there was still another factor, although information is scanty on this point. Local officials in most of these communities were operating on two fundamental misconceptions:

- While aware of some confusion among the ES staff, they overestimated the extent of consensus and clarity in Washington about what was wanted and expected of the sites, which reinforced their impression that they were being manipulated;
- They were unaware that the ES director felt virtually compelled to retain the projects selected for planning grants (for reasons explained elsewhere). Thus, they underestimated ES/Washington's commitment to them and thus were probably unduly responsive to ES pressure.

Consequently, at least some communities were very responsive to any suggestions made by federal officials. For example, one source concluded: that "[This community] has been highly responsive to program officer 'suggestions,' and often not because they thought it through and wanted it; but because they perceived the program officer desiring it." Another adds:

Now if you suggested a project component, you have two problems going for you. You are already a federal officer, and they are a naive rural school district who hasn't dealt very much with the feds. The school administrator quickly tends to buy it, to say "yes", because it means funding. But the school boards tend to say "No, you are not going to tell us what to do." They were for the most part conservative rural communities.

As a result, as one program officer noted:

[In] some of the rural districts, it may appear that there is more technical assistance given than there really is because of the way they accept and listen to suggestions that are made.

CONDITIONS AFFECTING RELATIONSHIPS WITH LOCAL PROJECTS: SOME PATTERNS

The program officers' responses to selected questionnaire items were combed for clues that might help explain differences in the way they related to the ten communities. Of course, it must be remembered that we are dealing with correlations among statements of the program officers themselves and with some independent measures. But with cautious interpretation, the data can nevertheless point to some conditions that influenced their behavior. Four types of conditions will be explored: those under which program officers say they (1) were able to help local projects; (2) provided technical assistance; (3) stressed the managerial role; and (4) provided advice.

Ability to Be of Help

Judging from the patterns of correlations among program officer responses about the ten projects (see Appendix A), it appears that as program officers' estimates of their ability to help increases, so do their estimates of:

- the number of requests for assistance they received ($r = .63$);
- the technical assistance ($r = .76$) and unsolicited advice they provided ($r = .58$);
- the competence of the local project administrators ($r = .71$);
- their influence on implementation ($r = .86$);

- their influence on implementation ($r = .86$);
- the number of incidents in which they have had a major impact on the local project ($r = .65$).

Their estimates of their ability to help were lower where they thought that local project personnel agreed on:

- project goals ($r = -.50$)
- project design ($r = -.43$)

In addition, there is a positive relationship between the amount of help the program officers say they provided and the extent to which ES/Washington had influenced the local project's plans; this last measure was developed independently by Abt Associates (see Herriott and Rosenblum, 1976).

One way to see the basic patterns of these relationships more clearly is to use the "extreme differences" method. Since the cases in the middle of the distribution are likely to demonstrate a mixed effect, any relationship should be most evident in extreme cases. Using this method, the projects have been divided in Table 1 into those which the program officers said they helped the most and those they believed they helped least. (See Appendix C, Item 27.) Terms used in Table 1 (and Table 2) are explained in Figure 6.

What do these sites have in common? As the program officers assessed it, their helpfulness does not appear to be related to their management role. In fact, one of the two sites in which management was stressed fell into the most helped category while the other was in the least helped category.

But their helpfulness does appear to be related to the amount of technical assistance they believed that they provided. Two of the three sites that were helped most also received the most technical assistance. The site that received the least technical assistance was among those helped least.

In addition, the sites to which program officers said they gave the most help also, according to their estimates, tended to receive the most advice about implementation. However, they did not necessarily give these sites more advice about project goals. In fact, program officers seldom claimed that their advice influenced the conceptual design or goals of any project, although they apparently exerted more influence on the design of projects 4 and 7 than of projects 2 and 5, again using their own estimates as

TABLE 1

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE THREE LOCAL PROJECTS HELPED
MOST AND THE THREE HELPED LEAST BY PROGRAM OFFICERS

PROJECT RANK	RANKS ON INDEPENDENT VARIABLES																	
	Mgt. Role	TA Role	Advisory Role	Assistance		Local Program's		Role	Impact Incidents			ES Inf.	Commitment of:		Readiness for		Initiation	Effectiveness of
Most helped sites				Imp. Goals	Reg. Off.	Cons.	Comp.	Cons.	Total	Major	Minor	On Plan*	Leaders	Staff	Change*		of Change*	Early Implementation*
1 Saint Martin	9	1	1	1	1	1	10	10	1	3	1	2	1	L	M	2	5	8
2 Uppsala Valley	4	2	2	9	4	10	3	5	2	4	2	4	3	M	H	4	3	2
3 Northampton	1	6	5	10	2	4	1	2	4	7	8	8	8	H	H	1	3	3
Least helped sites																		
8 Glasgow	6	10	9	7	8	5	4	7	6	2	4	3	7	M	L	7	5	7
9 Mount Olivia	2	5	6	7	4	3	2	1	3	6	3	5	5	H	L	4	7	1
10 Dover	8	7	10	6	7	9	6	3	10	8	4	8	9	H	M	4	7	4
Pearson Correlations (All Ten Projects)	.12	.76	.86	.24	.63	.58	-.32	-.53	.67	.42	.65	.25	.42	.32	.50	.37	.25	.05

*Independent measures developed by Abt Associates, Inc. Signs have been changed to reflect actual directions of correlations.

Figure 6

An Explanation of Terms Used in Tables 1 and 2

Most Helped Sites--The three projects which program officers estimate they have helped the most. (See Appendix C, Item 27. This variable used in Table 1 only.)

Least Helped Sites--The three projects which program officers estimate they have helped the least. (See Appendix C, Item 27. This variable used in Table 1 only.)

Projects Which Received Most TA--The three projects which program officers estimate were provided the most technical assistance. (See Appendix C, Items 5-9. This variable used in Table 1 only.)

Projects Which Received Least TA--The three projects which program officers estimate were provided the least technical assistance. (See Appendix C, Items 5-9. This variable used in Table 2 only.)

Linear Correlations--Pearsonian correlations among all ten sites for each independent variable and the variables listed in the left-hand column.

Rank on Independent Variables--The ranking of the ten projects on each independent variable.

Management Role--Stress that program officers said they placed on the managerial role (See Appendix C, Items 1-4.)

Technical Assistance--Amount of technical assistance the program officers said they provided. (See Appendix C, Items 5-9.)

Advisory Role: Implementation--Amount of advice program officers said they provided. (See Appendix C, Items 10-12.)

Advisory Role: Goals--Amount of advice program officers said that they had given concerning project goals. (See Appendix C, Items 8, 9.)

Assistance Requested--Frequency with which program officers said a local project had requested assistance. (See Appendix C, Items 13, 14.)

Assistance Offered--Frequency with which program officers said they had offered assistance to a local project. (See Appendix C, Item 30.)

Local Project Consensus--Extent to which program officers believed local administrators agreed among themselves about the project. (See Appendix C, Items 15, 16.)

Local Project Competence--Level of competence of local administrators as estimated by program officers. (See Appendix C, Items 17, 18.)

Figure 6 (continued)

Impact Incidents: Total--Total number of incidents program officers recalled concerning a particular project. (See Appendix C, "Impact Index.")

Impact Incidents: Major--Total number of incidents program officers recalled concerning a particular project which they considered "major" incidents. (See Appendix C, "Impact Index.")

Impact Incidents: Minor--Total number of incidents program officers recalled concerning a particular project which they considered "minor" incidents. (See Appendix C, "Impact Index.")

ES Influence on Plan--An independent measure developed by Abt Associates based on the percentage of professional staff in each local project reporting that ES/Washington had a "great deal" of influence on the local project plan. (See Herriott and Rosenblum, 1976, p. 64.)

Commitment of Leaders--An independent measure developed by Abt Associates based on the degree to which the local superintendent was involved in preparing a letter to express interest in participating in the ES program. (See Herriott and Rosenblum, 1976, pp. 38-39.)

Commitment of Staff--An independent measure developed by Abt Associates based on the percentage of teachers in the district who said they consider the ES program a "good idea." (See Herriott and Rosenblum, 1976, p. 66.)

Readiness for Change--An independent measure developed by Abt Associates based on estimates of the following combination of factors: (a) the range of groups within the school system which participated in identifying local needs and project goals; (b) the variety of sources of influence on the formal project plan; (c) independence of the project plan from the influence of ES/Washington; (d) the degree of congruence between locally identified problems and formal project goals; and (e) the extent to which the local professional staff accepted the project plan. (See Herriott and Rosenblum, pp. 57-66.)

Effectiveness of Early Implementation--An independent measure developed by Abt Associates estimating the amount of change that had taken place during the first years of implementation. The measure is based on estimates of the following combination of factors: (a) the number of "facets" of a school district that exhibit change (i.e., change in the curriculum, instruction, community participation, governance, and evaluation); (b) the proportion of the school district affected by these changes; and (c) a qualitative estimate of the "difference" that each innovation has made in the district. (This measure is still being revised by Abt Associates. Details can be obtained by writing directly to Robert Herriott, Abt Associates, 55 Wheeler Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138.)

criteria. By contrast, program officers did think they had a high degree of influence on procedures at two of the sites that they helped most. They also thought they helped least two of the sites in which they had the least influence.

Program officers tend to recall a greater number of incidents in which they attempted to exert influence at those sites that they believed they helped most. Although the overall pattern is not very consistent ($r = .42$), the two sites that were most subject to major incidents of influence were among those that were helped the most.

In addition to the way the program officers related to the local school districts, other conditions were present which were associated with their perceived ability to help. Thus, projects that received the most assistance tended to ask for it. The three that were helped most also ranked first, second and fourth in requesting advice and technical assistance. Of course, the program officers tended to offer assistance even when it was not solicited ($r = .59$), but the pattern for this practice is not clear cut for the extreme cases; for example, the most assisted sites included both extremes--the site where unsolicited help was most frequently offered and the one where it was least frequently offered.

More important is the fact that program officers believe that administrators at the sites they helped most agreed with their role definitions ($r = .67$). The two sites ranking highest on role consensus are among the three most helped; and the site with lowest consensus is among the three helped least.

Also, there is a slight tendency for program officers to report being of more help to projects where they judged the local administrators to be relatively unqualified, but again the pattern is not well defined for the extreme cases (see Table 1).

There is a modest relationship between the program officers' estimates of their helpfulness and a related but independent measure developed by Abt Associates (see Herriott and Rosenblum, 1976): the proportion of local professional staff estimating that Washington Experimental Schools officials had a "great deal of influence" on their school district's formal project plan ($r = .42$). Two of the most helped projects also were the most subject to Washington influence, and one of the least helped sites ranked low on ES

influence as measured by Herriott and Rosenblum, 1976). Still, the fact that one of the most helped sites ranked low on this measure and another that was moderately influenced by Washington was not helped much, indicates that Washington influence on the formal plan was not always necessary or productive for the local project.

Receiving help does not appear to be related to the ability of a local program to implement its plan during the early stages (another measure developed by Herriott and Rosenblum, 1976). It is probably significant that all three of the most helped sites ranked high on their initial readiness for change, as estimated by Herriott and Rosenblum (1976), but the most helped sites ranked lower (though still above the median) on measurements of their ability to actually initiate change.

The extent of help provided to the local projects also is vaguely connected to the commitment expressed by the local staffs to this project ($r=.50$). Using an estimate of commitment developed by Herriott and Rosenblum (1976), the staff was highly committed in two of the three most helped sites and demonstrated only low commitment in two of the three sites that were helped least. But the amount of commitment of the local leaders seems to be a less important factor than the commitment of the staff. In fact, leadership commitment is high in two of the three least helped sites and mixed in the sites that were helped most.

Technical Assistance

Judging from the patterns of the correlations (see Appendix A), it appears that the more technical assistance that program officers say they have provided, the more:

- helpful they think they have been ($r = .76$);
- requests for assistance they have received ($r = .76$);
- favorably they evaluate the competence of the local school administrators ($r = .75$);
- influence they believe they have had on implementation ($r = .79$);
- incidents they can recall in which they had a major impact ($r = .70$).

The goal consensus of local project personnel is lower where program officers say they have provided more technical assistance ($r = -.53$).

According to the program officers' estimates, the most technical assistance was provided to three sites; three other sites received the least technical assistance (see Table 2). Two of the former sites also received the most advice about implementation, and two of the latter were among the three sites which received the least advice. In general, the amount of technical assistance program officers say they provided is associated with the management role. It is true, though, that the two sites at which there was the least stress on management were among those that received the most technical assistance, which suggests that there may be a trade-off between these two roles, at least in extreme cases.

Also, it is worth noting that although the correlation between the two advisory roles (i.e., advice about implementation and about goals) is low ($r = .28$); and although program officers seem to have exerted less influence over goals than over implementation, the program officers had a high degree of influence over goals at two of the sites that received the most technical assistance. It is possible that in some cases technical assistance can, advertently or inadvertently, shape goals.

In general, the sites which were estimated to have received the most technical assistance seem to have requested at least some of it. The two which received the most technical assistance ranked first and second on this measure. There is also a tendency on the part of program officers to say they offer technical assistance whether it was requested or not ($r = .51$) to sites which had previously requested it ($r = .48$). Apparently they tend to expand the technical assistance role to those sites.

Role consensus between the program officer and local administrators may contribute to the amount of technical assistance provided ($r = .61$); two of the most assisted sites ranked first and second on role consensus. However, the fact that one of the most assisted sites was ranked low on role consensus indicates that consensus is not always necessary.

The program officers' answers suggest that the lack of commitment of the local administrators may be an incentive for help ($r = -.39$) provided that they otherwise seem to be competent ($r = .75$).

TABLE 2

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE THREE LOCAL PROJECTS RECEIVING THE MOST TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (TA) AND THE THREE RECEIVING THE LEAST TA

Project Rank	RANKS ON INDEPENDENT VARIABLES																
	Mgt.	Advisory	Role	Assist	Local Proj.		Role	Impact		Incidents	ES Inft.	Commitment of:		Readiness for	Initiation	Effectiveness of	
Received most TA	Role	Impl.	Goals	Req.	Off.	Cons.	Comp.	Cons.	Total	Major	Minor	on Plan*	Leaders	Staff	Change*	of Change*	Early Implementation*
1 Saint Martin	9	1	1	1	1	10	10	1	3	1	2	1	L	M	2	5	8
2 Uppsala Valley	10	7	3	6	8	6	4	9	1	6	1	6	M	L	7	9	6
3 New Brunswick	4	2	9	2	4	3	5	2	4	2	4	3	M	H	4	3	2
Received least TA																	
8 New Rheinland	7	8	5	8	10	5	8	8	10	10	10	4	L	M	9	3	9
9 Yorktown	3	10	2	10	4	8	6	6	9	9	8	2	L	L	10	10	10
10 Glasgow	6	7	3	5	8	4	7	6	2	4	3	7	M	L	7	5	7
Pearson Correlations (All Ten Projects)	-.33	.79	.37	.76	.51	-.39	-.75	.61	.53	.70	.43	.35	.14	-.26	.37	.09	-.21

*Independent measures developed by Abt Associates

Program officers tend to recall more influence incidents at the sites that have received the most technical assistance.. All three that received the most assistance rank high on this measure. The two that rank lowest on influence also are among those that rank lowest on technical assistance. However, the fact that one of the latter sites ranks second on influence indicates that influence can also be exerted apart from technical assistance. For the 10 sites as a whole, the relationship with technical assistance is clearer with major influences ($r = .70$) than with minor influences ($r = .43$). The two sites with the most major incidents were both among the most assisted sites.

The amount of technical assistance they believe they were able to provide is not clearly related to independent measures of the amount of influence the Washington Experimental Schools office exerted on the formal plan ($r = .35$), nor to the local district's ability to initiate change ($r = .13$). But there is a loose relationship with another independent measure: the district's readiness for change ($r = .42$); two of the least helped sites rank low on readiness and one (possibly two) of the most helped ranks high. The leaders and staff of the most helped projects are not necessarily highly committed ($r = .13$, $r = .26$), but it may be significant that staff commitment is low in two of the three sites that had the least help.

Although it is not reflected in the correlation ($r = -.21$) there is some tendency for the local projects receiving the most technical assistance to have changed the most in the early stages of the project. At least, the three sites that received the least technical assistance all ranked very low on effectiveness of implementation and one of the three which received the most technical assistance ranked very high (second) on the measure of early implementation. However, it is true that the one site that received the most technical assistance is also relatively low (eighth) on early implementation.

Similar analyses were undertaken with a focus on the managerial role and on advisory roles. The patterns in the data can be summarized as follows:

The Managerial Role

As managerial responsibilities increase, it appears that:

- program officers' estimates of local consensus on goals and design increases ($r = .80$; $r = .67$);
- their estimated influence on goals diminishes ($r = -.62$);
- they offer more unsolicited advice ($r = .48$);
- they can recall fewer incidents in which they have had an impact ($r = -.52$).

Advisory Roles

As the amount of advice they provided about implementation problems increases, so does:

- ES/Washington influence on project plans ($r = .56$);
- program officers' estimates of their ability to help ($r = .86$);
- the amount of unsolicited advice they give ($r = .82$);
- the technical assistance they have given ($r = .82$);
- requests for assistance ($r = .66$);
- program officers' estimates of the competence of local school administrators ($r = .86$); and
- their ability to recall major incidents in which they have had an impact ($r = .54$).

Where program officers' influence on project goals has been higher:

- the project has been less ready for change ($r = -.48$);
- the amount of change has been greater (i.e., magnitude: $r = .75$; pervasiveness: $r = .60$) and early implementation ($r = .72$).
- the commitment of the leaders (and to a lesser extent the staff) has been greater ($r = .73$; $r = .41$);
- local consensus on goals and design has been lower ($r = -.81$; $r = -.88$);
- they have employed their managerial responsibilities less ($r = -.62$).

SUMMARY

I have selected comments from the interviews, supplemented by reports from on-site observers, to highlight some of the consequences of different performance styles. It was noted that the influence attempts were not always or completely

successful and that the effects were not limited to local projects; the program officers themselves also seemed to be affected in various ways by the style they used.

Impact seemed to be contingent upon a number of interrelated factors, including: the stage of the project, the persistence of the federal agency and the continuity of its policies, changing expectations at the federal level, instability of the program, the ability of communities to defend themselves, and the vulnerability of particular communities.

An exploratory analysis of the program officers' own beliefs and observations provided some additional clues about conditions that might affect their ability to provide help, to render technical assistance and advice, and to fulfill their contract management responsibilities.

They thought they were of most help when it was requested, especially by local administrators whose competence they respected. But they also believed that their advice was helpful even when not solicited. They seemed to think their assistance had been helpful, and where they believed they had been helpful, they also estimated they had a significant impact on the project, especially in implementation procedures. Also, their own estimates of their helpfulness seemed to be related to local perceptions of the amount of influence that ES/Washington had on project plans.

Program officers stressed their managerial responsibilities in situations where local officials seemed in agreement on project goals and did not solicit their advice. When they did stress this role, they felt they had less impact on a project, especially on its goals.

Where program officers provided a lot of advice about implementation problems, they thought they had more impact, and (through an independent measure) the Washington office apparently had more influence on project plans at these sites. The more advice they said they gave, the more helpful they thought they had been. They were especially inclined to offer advice when they respected the competence of local administrators and when their assistance was requested, although they also gave unsolicited advice. Where they gave advice, they also provided more technical assistance.

Program officers report having more influence on the goals of those projects that, by an independent measure, were most ready for change. The leaders of such projects were committed to comprehensive change, but according to the program officers, disagreed among themselves about the particulars of the project. The more influence they had on goals, the less emphasis they said they placed on managerial responsibilities, and (through an independent measure) the more change that occurred in the project.

CHAPTER NOTES

1. The word impact was chosen because it seems more neutral than either the term "influence," which several respondents thought implied unwarranted intervention, or the term "help," which is the way some program officers preferred to think of their activities. The reader is again reminded that much of the information about federal impact was solicited from program officers themselves. Reasonable precautions were taken to corroborate these reports with other program officers, local project directors, written reports and informal conversations with on-site researchers employed by Abt Associates, and ES files in Washington. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that program officers themselves are one of the primary sources.
2. This measure is based on the number of incidents in which the program officer could recall having exercised major, minor or subtle influence on the design, procedures or other aspects of the project (see Appendix C). The number reported was weighted 3 for major influences, 2 for minor influences and 1 for subtle influences. The final score is the sum of the total number multiplied by these weights.
3. This measure and the subsequent measure in this section were developed by Abt Associates Inc. from a survey administered to the teachers and administrators who participated in this program in each of the ten school districts. (See Herriot and Rosenblum [1976] for details.)

CHAPTER FIVE. CONCLUSIONS

The tensions apparent in the ES program are part of a larger conflict in American society: the drive for autonomy on the part of local organizations versus the pressure for reintegration at higher levels. Federal control over education does not seem to be a real threat, because there is a system of checks and balances that assures a measure of compromise and negotiation between local and federal control. While the federal level often dominates, dominance changes from time to time, and from issue to issue.

Issues raised by the ES program have been observed in other programs as well (see Van Horn and Van Meter, 1976). Speaking of the ESEA Title I, Bailey and Mosher (1968) ask:

How could the [agency] be specific, even coercive, with regard to fiscal accounting, and at the same time be flexible in establishing criteria for local project design (emphasis added)? . . . What degree of uniformity in applying national standards should be expected or required? . . . (p. 99)

Such questions ultimately lead to what is a fundamental dilemma. To what extent should a federal agency defer to local autonomy; and to what extent should it enter into an active partnership with local agencies in order to influence and/or control the planning and implementation of local projects? The technical assistance and advisory roles of the ES program were clearly designed to do the latter. Are these two "assistance roles" appropriate? Are they feasible?

APPROPRIATENESS OF THE ASSISTANCE ROLES: THE POSITIVE SIDE

An argument can be made in favor of the assistance roles. Many local communities simply do not have the required expertise or the degree of commitment necessary to implement categorical programs by themselves. In this regard a study by the General Accounting Office concludes that ES projects did not prepare operational plans that could be used to carry out and evaluate changes, and did not provide adequate financial information (Comptroller General of the United States, 1976). Furthermore, local projects were able to delay potentially threatening evaluations. Given the inclination

of local communities to use outside funds to underwrite existing programs, it appears that some outside stimulus for change is often necessary (Griffiths, 1965; Kirst, 1973).

Even if the need for federal influence could not be justified, the fact of some kind of federal influence is undeniable. Influence is not control, however, and there is little evidence in this or in other programs to indicate that federal control is an imminent or inevitable threat. ES program officers appeared to be more aggressive and less inclined to defer to local officials than some authors suggest is typical of federal employees (Kirst, 1973; Murphy, 1971), and yet they were never in full control. These and other studies demonstrate the ability of local officials to protect themselves (Corwin, 1973; Kirst, 1973). For example, Ripley and his colleagues (1976) concluded that the federal representatives in CETA programs had less influence on decisions than any other group involved, including the staff of the state agency. Thomas (1976) concludes from a study of the Environmental Protection Agency's implementation strategies that far from providing central direction, the grant-in-aid device resulted in expanded control for the states, because of the uncertainty of federal appropriations, which nullified the agency's ability to require planning and to provide central direction. The agency's inability to define clearly the nature of environmental problems, and the inadequacy of data, forced the agency to bargain with the clientele. Finally, regional federal administrators followed contrasting leadership styles, which ranged from strong federal control to almost no direction at all.

Similarly, Murphy (1971) concludes that local school districts have primary control over how Title I funds are spent. Among the contributing causes identified were: differences between those who developed and those who implemented the policies, inadequate number of federal staff, disinclination to monitor, the tradition of local control, the absence of pressure from the clientele (the poor), and most important, the dispersion of control and power within the federal system.

At most, federal agencies act as a countervailing force, play a mediating role in a larger system of checks and balances, exerting a real but modest overall influence. Not only are government agencies only one of many sources of national influence, but also their power is restricted on all sides by controversy, congressional constraints, internal bureaucratic controls, and the small proportion of the total operational costs of any program typically provided by the federal government (Derthick, 1970). Local governments continue to exercise veto power over those policies that are most repugnant to them (Thomas, 1976).

The fact is that, if federal agencies are forced to rely only upon their legal and economic sanctions, they have very little leverage (Berke and Kirst, 1972; Nagi, 1976; Thomas, 1976). Despite concerted efforts for over a decade, the federal government has been unable to completely enforce legal decisions or to fully implement federal guidelines concerning desegregation and the ways in which schools have used federal monies intended to improve education for the poor. Federal agencies can try to coerce local agencies to comply through legal proceedings, but since this is a lengthy and expensive route, the courts can be used only in selected cases. Once a project has been funded, the economic sanctions available to agencies are limited to their authority to withhold funds and their ability to audit projects. For practical reasons, the former sanction can be used only rarely and in extreme situations. Federal guidelines are usually so vague that it is difficult to prove violations (Derthick, 1970). Moreover, congressmen are more responsive to the wishes of local officials than to federal bureaucrats. Thus, it is often virtually impossible to cut off local funds (Murphy, 1971). And the effectiveness of audits is limited by the inaccessibility of information, especially information about program operations in addition to fiscal expenditures (see Nagi, 1976; Van Horn and Van Meter, 1976).

In principle at least, the technical assistance and advisory roles provide another and perhaps more effective normative leverage (Etzioni, 1965). They help distribute another type of resource -- expertise. At the same time they create relationships in which socialization, occupation, persuasion and other normative controls can be brought to bear.

APPROPRIATENESS OF THE ASSISTANCE ROLES: THE NEGATIVE SIDE

However, good reasons exist to question whether government agencies should try to provide either advice or technical assistance since both roles constitute a potentially powerful and disruptive force. They have had clearly discernible negative as well as positive impacts on local projects. Even if federal agencies cannot control the local projects, the federal positions are consolidated when the authority of expertise is added to the program officer's powerful managerial role. There are logical contradictions in attempting to cultivate collegial relationships against a backdrop of power. The close working relationships involved in technical assistance and giving advice permit federal employees to influence, and on occasion even to coopt certain aspects of local projects. For, the local agency must not only comply with explicit regulations (a restriction that accompanies appropriations at any level of government), but also may find itself being led in directions that would not have been followed on the basis of local priorities alone. Low income communities, which depend on outside funds, are particularly vulnerable to federal intimidation and infringement on individual and local autonomy.

There are other, perhaps even more important considerations. One is that it is difficult for a government agency to provide assistance without compromising its contract management responsibilities. Because it is always possible that public funds will be misused, the federal program officer in this role must be regarded by local officials as a potential adversary. But to provide assistance s/he must become an ally and in the process will tend to become personally identified with a project's fate. If the advice is accepted by locals, the program officer has a personal investment in the project; if it is not followed, s/he may become unduly critical of the project. To the extent that a project seems to reflect personally upon the program officer s/he will be inclined to act as its advocate, perhaps minimizing its faults or exaggerating its strengths. This conflict of loyalty can become especially acute when a program officer also assumes responsibility for reviewing and making recommendations about the very same project components s/he has helped to design and implement.

In the course of providing technical assistance, program officers inevitably become much more familiar with some projects than others. This familiarity can distort their perceptions and perhaps ultimately undermine their objectivity. This places on the director of the overall program the entire burden of making comparative evaluations across all projects, and s/he is still forced to rely heavily upon the recommendations of several program officers each of whom may be acting as an advocate for a different project.

The problem can become aggravated when the program officers are also professional educators, perhaps only temporarily employed by the government. Their sympathy with professional colleagues accustomed to local autonomy and peer control can conflict with organizational responsibilities (i.e., federal regulations and contract compliance). This situation, of course, is not without solution. For example, a centralized decision structure staffed by career bureaucrats could serve as a check on such situations. However, if their agency supervisors are also professional educators, the agency will be vulnerable to cooptation by "the field" (see Corwin and Nagi, 1972; Van Horn, 1976).

In short, such conflicts of loyalty need not always compromise contract management responsibilities, but given the cross-pressures from the assistance roles, the potential for role conflict is real.

Even in the rare case which existed in ES where all projects are assured continuation, a federal agency still can be criticized for giving some projects more help than others, because (a) the projects receiving aid thereby have an edge in the competition for larger budgets at times of refunding and (b) it seems improbable that such active federal assistance can be made widely available. This last point is important. Under such conditions it will be virtually impossible to replicate on a wider scale even the most promising projects.

CONDITIONS NECESSARY FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

This mixed evaluation of federal assistance (as embodied in the project advisor and technical assistance specialist roles) is not merely an instance of investigative indecisiveness. It is impossible to make conclusive evaluations without considering the conditions that determine a federal agency's

capacity to render advice and technical assistance. This study has suggested that such federal assistance requires some rather exceptional circumstances to be effective. I now turn to the task of reviewing some of the conditions uncovered in the course of this investigation.

Because a given condition might affect the various components of each role in different ways, in discussing each condition consideration will be given (as appropriate) to each of the four role components described in Chapter Two: intensive role involvement, collegial relationships, specialized competence, and focused influence.

Project Stage

The amount and type of advice and technical assistance that seems appropriate changes during the course of a project. Advice is especially useful during the preliminary stages, whereas technical assistance can be most effective at very specific times, especially as problems of implementation arise. Also, it takes a certain amount of time (a) for the mutual trust essential to a collegial relationship to evolve, and (b) to allow local officials to establish their priorities and identify areas of greatest need. The stage of the project, then, helps dictate the amount and type of involvement that a program officer can hope to accomplish.

A problem arises, however, from the fact that program officers must alter their relationships with local officials as a project reaches transition points. A person whose skills are needed at one stage of the project might be less useful or effective at another stage, and it is not clear how to prepare for those changes. Clearer job descriptions and thorough in-service training would help, but there is no assurance that job applicants can be found who possess the range of skills, experience and personality traits necessary to undertake such a complex set of responsibilities. Even if ways could be found to prepare program officers for these adjustments, the local project directors involved in the relationship would also need background to prepare them for these transitions. Periodic orientation programs might be one solution.

Another option is to organize program officers into teams. A division of labor might permit individuals to bring their various skills to a project at different times as needed. The obstacles involved in fixing the locus of final authority for contract management and working out coordination would be difficult though not insurmountable.

Administrative Continuity

The amount of planning that has gone into a federal program obviously has an important bearing on its quality and the agency's ability to offer advice and technical assistance. Of course, planning is not the entire answer. Indeed, it is probably impossible to fully implement a controversial program as planned, because invariably general policies must be negotiated with the local communities and shaped to particular circumstances. (See Comptroller General of the U.S., 1976; Bailey and Mosher, 1968; Murphy, 1971; Van Horn, 1976, pp. 12-13). The Congress, the public, and program evaluators should not hold program managers responsible for circumstances beyond their control.

However, at a minimum, there must be a certain amount of continuity in the federal-local relationship if advice and technical assistance are to be effective. On this score, the fact that the local ES projects were given a five-year, irrevocable "moral commitment" was probably an important incentive behind Washington's efforts to provide assistance. For, having forfeited its right to terminate struggling projects, ES/Washington felt compelled to help them succeed. Nevertheless, in this instance, the local project directors were never fully persuaded that their projects would survive, if only because their contracts had to be renegotiated periodically. Some of them felt that they had no choice but to accept whatever assistance was offered.

Nor is assurance of survival enough. Program continuity at the federal level is also necessary if program officers are to establish their authority and build the mutual trust necessary to maintain a collegial relationship with local officials. In this case, frequent policy fluctuations and reversals early in this program and rapid turnover of program officers and directors proved to be very disruptive.

Prior Experience of Federal Program Director

The source of leadership for such federal programs is another factor to consider. The first ES program director came from outside the federal Civil Service. Diverse backgrounds can often help to infuse an agency with new ideas and energy. If the person is a professional educator, s/he can

also bring an important grasp of the practitioners' problems to the agency. Nevertheless, outside leaders face a handicap when they have not had practical experience in coping with the federal bureaucracy and when they do not have enough internal support to protect a new, controversial program from attack. And, as mentioned, their identification with the professional education community can also interfere with their ability to enforce organizational procedures and goals.

If program directors are recruited from outside the federal government, perhaps they should be required to serve an apprenticeship in another capacity within the agency prior to being assigned major leadership responsibilities.

Another alternative is to recruit the best candidates from the super grades of the Civil Service roster, and then monitor their actions through a panel of outside consultants from relevant professional fields. In addition, such a director's main assistants might be drawn from creative talent outside the agency.

Administrative Support

Providing advice and technical assistance also requires extra funds to pay for lower project loads and higher travel costs necessary to enable program officers to obtain detailed knowledge about a project. Because the Congress usually maintains strict control over salaries and expense monies, agencies often find it difficult even to obtain sufficient staff to routinely monitor programs (see Murphy, 1971). Technical assistance, being labor intensive, is particularly expensive. At best, such assistance probably can be justified and supported only in selected large-scale efforts where monitoring costs can be kept to a small percentage of total program cost.

Type of Legal Relationship

In a sense, the wrong legal instrument may have been used in the ES program. Given the existence of contracts between NIE and the school district, the program officer's formal power was always in the background overshadowing any overtures s/he made toward collegiality. Moreover, under such contractual

arrangements, federal officers are not expected to become personally involved in projects (Baker, 1975). Indeed, local officials can use explicit written agreements to parry federal influence. Even when the contract is not fully explicit, attempts on the part of a program officer to interpret it broadly can be seen as capricious and unwarranted distortions of the formal relationship. Even when a program officer is able to exert influence under such circumstances, her/his authority will still be in doubt, and is subject to appeal to the federal contracting officer.

Grants differ from contracts in an important respect. Whereas federal agencies use contracts to secure outside services for their own objectives, grants are awarded to support the recipient's objectives (Baker, 1975). The terms of grants are more flexible and hence more compatible with collegial relationships. There are also disadvantages, of course. Local officials will be vulnerable in some ways because they do not have explicit agreements to protect them. However, only very explicit contracts can protect them from federal caprice, and the novel social experiments undertaken in recent years do not seem to lend themselves to the required degree of explicitness.

The Program Officers' Expertise

How anxious local officials will be to receive federal advice and technical assistance depends in part on whether the program officers can demonstrate expertise in fields of relevance to the local project. Three conditions must be met to satisfy this requirement: (1) the agency must be able to employ people with particular specialties who also have the necessary administrative and managerial skills; (2) the program officers' areas of expertise must be relevant to the needs of the particular project to which they are assigned; (3) the program officers must be able to convince local officials that their advice and assistance will be useful.

Two critical problems can arise. First, local officials sometimes follow a program officer's advice irrespective of their own priorities. In extreme cases, a program officer's interests could virtually dictate the direction a local project takes. Secondly, contract management responsibilities might tend to be neglected by specialists. The program officer's primary obligation is to manage the contract. But were these managerial duties to be

stressed when program officers are recruited and evaluated, their specialized skills would become a secondary consideration. And, were the needed specialties given priority, the program officers might tend to depreciate or neglect their routine and often mechanical managerial responsibilities.

One option already has been suggested, namely for several program officers with different skills to work in teams. As mentioned, this would complicate the maze of relationships that local projects already have to deal with in most federal programs.

Sophistication and Expertise of the Local Community

Local officials seem to be more receptive to federal advice and technical assistance when: (1) they are committed to the objectives of the program (not merely participating to obtain the money); (2) they have not had prior unfavorable experience with federal agencies that would cause them to distrust program officers; (3) they are relatively competent individuals; and (4) they are not in full agreement among themselves concerning project goals or design.

These conditions cannot be met unless the projects are carefully selected for participation in a program. The selection process is usually handicapped by political considerations, deadlines, budgetary constraints, and lack of information. Consequently, it seems that agencies often have little choice but to select poor risk projects and either terminate them in mid-course or attempt to salvage them. However, when technical assistance is provided under these adverse circumstances federal officials have an overwhelming advantage. They can use money as leverage to force their own personal ideas on a local district. This is especially true when: (1) Local personnel lack the necessary competencies, but (2) nevertheless want the money, and (3) are easily intimidated and thus vulnerable to advice offered. The submissive, compliant districts that lack local expertise are the best candidates for federal assistance, but they are precisely the ones that are least able to defend themselves against the misuse of federal power and possible infringements upon local initiatives.

While it was not especially evident in this study, a potential irony should be mentioned. There is always a possibility that once an agency makes a commitment to render advice and technical assistance, it will be inclined to select those projects most likely to look to the federal government for

such counsel. Closer monitoring of the process through which local projects are selected to participate in programs would provide some safeguard. An appeals system to enable communities to take grievances against federal agencies to a neutral body is another possibility. Finally, perhaps federal agencies should exercise restraint and render counsel only within explicit guidelines and upon explicit request from local officials.

The Parties in the Relationship

The managerial role can be established vis-a-vis a few high level officials in a local school district who in turn can be held responsible for fulfilling the contract. However, the advice and technical assistance roles require a more complicated set of relationships. If a program officer is to become intensively involved in a project and work with local project members on a collegial basis, s/he must be prepared to establish relationships with a variety of individuals directly responsible for implementing the project; particularly, classroom teachers and principals. But these individuals are often peripheral to the local authority structure. The dilemma is that while program officers need the support of school district administrators, their support is not a sufficient basis for establishing rapport with lower echelon employees; and in fact in some school districts official endorsement simply puts employees on guard. Again, it seems that the situation requires either very sensitive and skillful individuals as program officers or a team of specialists to work in different ways with various people at the local level.

It seems apparent from the experience of the ES program that federal agencies sometimes can provide effective advice and technical assistance, but only under rather complex conditions. In practice, most agencies are severely limited in their ability to meet these conditions. Whether or not such federal assistance can be made more feasible in the future depends upon the answers to at least three practical questions.

- Can a federal agency provide comparable assistance to all school districts wishing to implement a given program? And if not, how can the uneven treatment of different local projects be justified; indeed, how can the experiments that have received extensive assistance be replicated elsewhere?
- Can a federal agency employ enough specialists with the range of skills necessary to help local projects operating under diverse circumstances as they evolve through different stages? And if so, what safeguards can prevent federal employees from misusing their authority with local officials dependent on outside funds?
- Can program officers assume responsibility for providing assistance without compromising their managerial responsibilities?

While these issues cropped up repeatedly in the course of this study and some options were mentioned, they have not been satisfactorily resolved here. They should be addressed more thoroughly in future research on this neglected topic. In the meantime, I personally doubt that federal assistance has been shown to be superior to the option of requiring local projects to secure their own advice and technical assistance from qualified external sources.

SUMMARY

A case can be made for federal advice and technical assistance. Many communities need it, and under some circumstances, may even require it. Fears about impending federal takeover of local projects are not persuasive. While such assistance does imply a degree of federal influence, communities are by no means defenseless. Federal control does not seem to be an imminent threat.

The problems associated with growing federal dominance should not be minimized. Sustained federal assistance could interfere with local autonomy. However, this political issue should not be allowed to drown out equally serious questions about the feasibility of such moves, when they are thought desirable.

Feasibility is not an "either-or" issue. It depends upon whether the necessary conditions are present, that is, the conditions which permit an agency to provide effective assistance. A number of these conditions became evident in the course of this study. At a minimum, it seems that a federal agency cannot provide effective advice and technical assistance unless at

least the following factors have been taken into account: the stage of the project, the amount of administrative continuity, the program director's experience with the federal bureaucracy, the amount of support and funds to pay for the costs of assistance, whether or not assistance is encouraged or inhibited by the contract/grant mechanism, the combined expertise of the program officers, the sophistication and experience of the local community, and the parties in the relationship.

It is not now clear how federal agencies can meet most of these contingencies. Assistance can compromise an agency's contract management responsibilities, impair the ability of program officers to remain objective toward all projects, and jeopardize any chance of replicating promising projects. Moreover, it is questionable that any federal agency can afford to employ enough specialists with the range of skills demanded of complex research and development projects. And even if that were possible, it would be necessary to devise novel methods of organizing and deploying these specialists, and to establish safeguards to protect communities from the arbitrary actions of aggressive federal employees.

In any event, we have seen that the major question is not merely whether it is appropriate for the federal government to provide advice and technical assistance to local projects. An equally important question is whether it is feasible. This study has provided some clues, but our answers are by no means conclusive. It is hoped that this report will stimulate further research on this important topic.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PEARSON CORRELATION MATRIX FOR SELECTED VARIABLES*

(N = 10 Projects)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
1. ES Influence	-	-.20	-.35	.36	.46	.20	.37	.65	.12	-.29	.15	.42	.38	-.15	.35	.08	.56	.36	.47	.44	.13	.12
2. Readiness for Change	-.20	-	.41	-.59	-.69	-.48	-.65	-.57	-.56	.21	.42	.37	.25	-.65	.46	.00	.18	-.48	.50	.64	.24	.48
3. Initiation of Change	-.35	.41	-	-.20	.00	-.11	-.26	-.08	-.70	.25	.00	.24	.13	-.20	.09	.18	.22	-.33	.26	.29	-.19	.20
4. Magnitude of Change	.36	-.59	-.20	-	.70	.93	.98	.86	.29	-.58	-.81	.15	-.11	.24	-.13	.37	.08	.75	-.20	-.22	.05	-.14
5. Extensiveness of Change	.46	-.69	.00	.70	-	.59	.72	.84	.04	-.41	-.53	.12	-.12	.20	-.17	-.11	.17	.40	-.13	-.19	-.11	-.06
6. Pervasiveness of Change	.20	-.48	-.11	.93	.59	-	.84	.68	.20	-.51	-.71	.14	.04	.03	-.20	-.25	.07	.60	-.11	-.23	-.15	-.07
7. Early Implementation	.38	-.65	-.26	.98	.72	.84	-	.86	.35	-.51	-.75	.05	-.26	.36	-.21	-.38	.04	.72	-.33	-.31	-.05	-.25
8. Commitment of Leaders	.65	-.57	.08	.86	.84	.68	.86	-	.15	-.60	-.76	.32	.01	.20	.14	-.30	.36	.74	.06	.05	.02	.00
9. Commitment of Staff	.12	-.56	.70	.29	.04	.20	.35	.15	-	-.16	-.15	-.50	.36	.35	-.26	-.19	-.38	.41	-.34	-.28	.25	-.18
10. Local Consensus on Goals	-.29	.21	.25	-.58	-.41	-.51	-.51	-.60	.16	-	.79	-.43	.00	.13	-.53	.80	.34	-.81	-.17	-.20	-.46	-.49
11. Local Consensus on Design	-.15	.42	.00	-.81	-.53	-.71	-.75	-.76	-.16	.79	-	-.16	.13	-.15	-.20	.67	.15	-.88	.09	.07	.00	-.04
12. P.O. Helpfulness	.42	.37	.24	.15	.12	.14	.05	.32	-.50	-.43	-.16	-	.58	-.31	.76	-.12	.86	.24	.71	.63	.42	.65
13. Offering Unsolicited Advice and Criticism	.38	.25	.13	-.11	-.12	.04	-.26	.01	-.36	.00	.12	.60	-	-.38	.51	.49	.82	.00	.80	.48	-.17	.28
14. Clarity of NIE Policy and Procedures	-.15	-.65	-.20	.24	.20	.03	.36	.20	.03	.36	.20	.35	.12	-.15	-.31	-.38	-.28	.28	-.66	-.69	-.15	-.64
15. Technical Assistance	.35	.43	.09	-.13	-.17	-.20	-.21	.14	-.26	-.53	-.20	.76	.51	-.33	-	-.33	.79	.37	.75	.76	.53	.70
16. Managerial Role	.07	.00	.18	-.37	-.11	-.25	-.38	-.30	-.19	.80	.67	-.12	.48	.02	-.33	-	.13	-.62	.19	-.06	-.52	-.34
17. Influence on Implementation	.56	.18	.22	.07	.17	.07	.04	.36	-.38	-.34	-.15	.86	.82	-.27	.78	.13	-	.28	.86	.66	.20	.54
18. Influence on Goals	.36	-.48	-.33	.75	.40	.60	.72	.73	.41	-.81	.88	.24	.00	.28	.37	-.62	.28	-	.00	.01	.22	.07
19. Project Competence	.47	.50	.26	-.19	-.13	-.11	-.32	.06	-.34	-.17	.09	.71	.80	-.66	.75	.19	.86	.00	-	.90	.27	.70
20. Assistance Requested	.44	.64	.29	-.22	-.19	-.23	-.31	.05	-.28	-.20	.06	.63	.48	-.69	.76	.06	.66	.00	.90	-	.47	.76
21. Total Impact	.13	.24	-.19	-.05	-.11	-.15	-.05	.02	.25	-.46	.00	.42	-.17	-.15	.53	-.52	.20	.22	.27	.47	-	.75
22. Major Influence	.13	.48	.20	-.14	-.07	-.07	-.25	.00	-.18	-.49	-.04	.65	.28	-.64	.70	-.34	.54	.07	.70	.76	.75	-

*Legend: The correlations for variables 1 through 9 are based on ranks. These scores were developed by Abt Associates. The correlations for variables 10-22 are based on measures developed from questionnaires completed by program officers. Between 2 and 4 program officers answered for each site. Their responses were summed and averaged by site. Also, all project stages have been combined. (See Figure 6, pp. 77-78, for details.)

APPENDIX B

PROGRAM OFFICER IMPACT: A SYNOPSIS OF 133 INCIDENTS

Incidents Related to Contract Manager Role* (N = 36)

- Refusing to continue financing a physical education program until board agreed to continue program after termination of contract. (1)
- Withholding funds until the promised project objectives/plans were formulated, or reformulated. (3)
- Threatening to cancel contract unless district proceeded to implement project plans. (1)
- Requiring prior approval from ES before spending project money for hiring consultants, staff training activity, travel plans, teaching supplies and materials, or renovation of buildings, or making program changes. (5)
- Disapproving a superintendent's request to appropriate project funds for his own personal use. (2)
- Denying requests by local projects to create a separate position for the project director. (3)
- Requesting local districts to replace project directors. (3)
- Interviewing a new superintendent of schools to evaluate him as a project director. (2)
- Disapproving a proposed project director. (1)
- Ordering a school district to reduce the size of its request (but without stipulating how much). (1)
- Requiring schools to increase administrative costs at the expense of staff development. (1)
- Pressuring a district to staff a promised bilingual program under threat of a budget reduction.
- Requiring a community to broaden the base of citizen participation in planning. (3)
- Disapproving a request to paint walls in connection with renovation of a school room for early childhood education. (1)

* The number of times this type of incident was reported is in parentheses ().

- Criticizing local officials for not following SOP. (3)
- Refusing to issue guidelines after repeated requests from local districts. (1)
- Slow processing of local project's requests for reimbursement. (1)
- Providing simplified forms and procedures to expedite payments to local districts. (3)

Incidents Related to Project Advisor Role (N = 72)

- Disapproving plans for summer workshops for teachers in career education and cultural education. (1)
- Blocking a proposed math component. (3)
- Informing autonomous school districts they must collaborate as a condition for receiving funds. (3)
- Criticizing the project or plan for:
 - Lack of coordination (6);
 - Too much authority granted to consultants to set priorities and policy (1);
 - Lack of meaningful local evaluation (5);
 - Lack of meaningful "comprehensiveness" (1);
 - Lack of detail about how plan would be implemented (1);
 - Excessive personnel and/or costs (1);
 - Vague project goals (and characterizing the plan as a "loose collection of ideas") (7);
 - Lack of relationship between goals and the purpose of the project (5);
 - Inconsistencies among proposed changes (2);
 - Lack of detail about proposed staff training (2);
 - Inadequacies in the plans for administration and governance of the project (6);
 - Lack of detail about procedures for developing the career and the vocational components of the plan (5);
 - Lack of detail in plans regarding curriculum changes (3).
- Insisting that a summer staff development plan be prepared and submitted for approval. (1)
- Requiring detailed plan for integrating Head Start children into early childhood education program. (1)

- Challenging and criticizing school officials during meetings. (3)
- Criticizing a school principal, which directly led to his resignation. (1)
- Informing local officials of the availability of equipment, which was then budgeted into their plan. (1)
- Encouraging a project to establish a training program for the local evaluation staff. (4)
- Encouraging a district to use a team approach to the local evaluation. (5)
- Urging districts to abandon formal evaluation designs for activities that would be more immediately useful to the district. (1)
- Providing moral support to a group of teachers who were encountering resistance to a proposed resource center. (1)
- Expressing sympathy and understanding about local problems and providing support to local personnel. (1)
- Encouraging local district to go beyond the original plan in curriculum reform. (1)

Incidents Related to Technical Assistance Role (N = 21)

- Requesting and helping a project to revise the materials that had been developed because of their poor quality. (4)
- Suggesting that a position be created for a full-time on-site project consultant. (1)
- Proposing definition of, and criteria for, behavioral objectives related to an evaluation/design. (4)
- Recommending a specific teacher to be director of the local evaluation. (1)
- Selecting and/or briefing a consultant to work with the local project. (2)
- Proposing a way to reorganize the project's governance system. (1)
- Instructing a local evaluation staff person about her responsibilities. (3)
- Acquainting districts with packaged evaluation and curriculum plans. (3)
- Helping implement a packaged math program in an elementary school. (2)

Incidents Unrelated to Official Roles (N = 4)

- Entering school building and interviewing teachers without informing principals. (1)
- Prematurely informing a school board member about a superintendent's confidential decision to resign. (1)
- Informing a school board that a disproportionate amount of money was being spent for the athletic program. (1)
- Intervening in a local dispute between teachers and board. (1)

APPENDIX C

RESPONSES OF PROGRAM OFFICERS TO SELECTED QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS, BY STAGE OF PROGRAM*

Type of Item or Index	Stage of Program					
	Selection		Planning		Imple- mentation	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
<u>Management Role Index</u>						
1. I have had to take steps to assure compliance to the proposal or contract because the local project seemed to be in violation.	S/AN 46	(5)	20	(4)	20	(4)
	SM 27	(3)	35	(7)	35	(7)
	O/VF 27	(3)	45	(9)	45	(9)
2. I have advised local administrators that their practices were inconsistent with the proposal or contract.	S/AN 43	(3)	30	(6)	30	(6)
	SM 43	(6)	25	(5)	25	(5)
	O/VF 14	(1)	45	(9)	45	(9)
3. I have disapproved requests formally submitted to NIE by local project administrators.	S/AN 50	(4)	18	(3)	24	(4)
	SM 25	(2)	35	(6)	29	(5)
	O/VF 25	(2)	47	(8)	47	(8)
4. I have advised local officials that their plans probably would not be approved by NIE.	S/AN 27	(3)	28	(5)	31	(5)
	SM 36	(4)	33	(6)	31	(5)
	O/VF 36	(4)	39	(7)	38	(6)
<u>Technical Assistance Role Index</u>						
5. I have worked along with local administrators in a technical capacity.	S/AN 70	(14)	48	(9)	27	(4)
	SM 5	(1)	26	(5)	13	(2)
	O/VF 25	(5)	26	(5)	60	(9)
6. I have offered suggestions to local administrators about ways to implement their plans, or to resolve the problem(s) they were faced with.	S/AN 47	(10)	30	(6)	6	(1)
	SM 24	(5)	35	(7)	19	(3)
	O/VF 29	(6)	35	(7)	75	(12)
7. I have helped local administrators formulate or clarify their plans.	S/AN 43	(9)	35	(7)	19	(3)
	SM 29	(6)	25	(5)	19	(3)
	O/VF 29	(6)	40	(8)	66	(10)

*Each program officer made separate observations for each program for which he was responsible. The numbers reflect the situations observed (not the number of program officers or number of programs). Since some program officers were responsible for more programs than others, some of them have a disproportionate influence on these programs.

EXPLANATION OF LETTERS:

S/AN - Seldom or almost never
 SM - Situation is mixed
 O/VF - Often, very frequently
 D/SD - Disagree or strongly disagree
 U - Undecided
 A/SA - Agree or strongly agree

Advice about Goals Index

8. I have influenced the conceptual design of this local program.

Stage of Program						
	Selection		Planning		Imple- mentation	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
D/SD	62	(13)	60	(12)	56	(9)
U	5	(1)	10	(2)	13	(2)
A/SA	34	(2)	30	(6)	31	(5)

9. I have influenced the goals of this project.

D/SD	66	(14)	75	(15)	75	(12)
U	24	(5)	20	(4)	13	(2)
A/SA	10	(2)	5	(1)	13	(2)

Advice about Implementation Index

10. I have influenced specific decisions about implementation procedures.

S/AN	52	(11)	40	(8)	13	(2)
SM	19	(4)	5	(1)	25	(4)
O/VF	29	(6)	55	(11)	62	(9)

11. I have proposed a procedure or component that was eventually implemented in this program.

S/AN	81	(17)	70	(14)	44	(7)
SM	10	(2)	15	(3)	44	(7)
O/VF	10	(2)	15	(3)	13	(2)

12. Local school district administrators have sought to implement my advice.

S/AN	34	(7)	31	(6)	13	(2)
SM	14	(3)	15	(3)	20	(3)
O/VF	52	(11)	54	(10)	67	(10)

Requests for Assistance Index

13. Local administrators have asked me to assist them in a technical capacity.

S/AN	71	(15)	55	(11)	13	(2)
SM	14	(3)	25	(5)	38	(6)
O/VF	14	(3)	20	(4)	50	(8)

14. Local administrators have solicited my advice.

S/AN	71	(15)	40	(8)	12	(2)
SM	10	(2)	20	(4)	13	(2)
O/VF	19	(4)	40	(8)	75	(12)

Local Consensus Index

15. The people involved in the Experimental Schools (ES) Program in this school district have agreed on what the program is trying to accomplish.

S/AN	24	(5)	18	(4)	31	(5)
SM	43	(9)	27	(6)	31	(5)
O/VF	34	(7)	55	(12)	38	(6)

16. The people primarily responsible for implementing the ES Program have agreed about how the project should be designed and implemented.

S/AN	33	(7)	18	(4)	13	(2)
SM	38	(8)	36	(8)	44	(7)
O/VF	29	(6)	46	(10)	44	(7)

Local Competence Index

17. Most local people responsible for implementing this project have been highly committed to comprehensive change.

D/SD	43	(9)	20	(4)	25	(4)
U	38	(8)	60	(12)	31	(5)
A/SA	19	(4)	20	(4)	44	(7)

		Stage of Program					
		Selection		Planning		Imple- mentati	
		%	N	%	N	%	N
18.	The local administrators who have been in charge of the project are well qualified to direct a comprehensive change effort.	D/SD 48	(10)	40	(2)	31	(5)
		U 24	(5)	35	(7)	38	(6)
		A/SA 29	(6)	25	(5)	31	(5)

Clarity of Role Items

19.	I have had enough backing from EE administrators in my dealings with the local project.	S/AN 10	(2)	15	(3)	7	(1)
		SM 38	(8)	50	(10)	53	(8)
		O/VF 51	(11)	35	(7)	40	(6)
20.	I have been clear about what my responsibilities are as an officer in the Rural ES Program.	D/SD 14	(3)	55	(11)	6	(1)
		U 19	(4)	15	(3)	13	(2)
		A/SA 67	(14)	30	(6)	81	(13)
21.	NIE administrators have agreed with me about my responsibilities as a program officer.	D/SD 19	(4)	10	(2)	0	(0)
		U 43	(9)	30	(6)	31	(5)
		A/SA 38	(8)	60	(12)	59	(11)
22.	Local school district administrators have agreed with me about what my responsibilities are as a program officer.	D/SD 10	(2)	65	(13)	13	(2)
		U 33	(7)	10	(2)	38	(6)
		A/SA 57	(12)	25	(5)	50	(8)
23.	ES policies and/or requirements have changed with respect to this project.	S/AN 14	(31)	23	(5)	13	(2)
		SM 33	(3)	50	(11)	19	(3)
		O/VF 52	(11)	27	(6)	69	(11)
24.	ES policies and/or requirements have changed importantly with respect to this project.	D/SD 30	(6)	40	(8)	41	(7)
		U 5	(1)	40	(8)	24	(4)
		A/SA 65	(13)	20	(4)	35	(6)
25.	ES procedures have been interpreted and implemented in a consistent way with respect to this project.	D/SD 35	(7)	15	(3)	12	(2)
		U 20	(4)	60	(12)	24	(4)
		A/SA 45	(9)	25	(5)	65	(11)
26.	The statements of ES officials have provided local school district administrators with a clear understanding of procedures and expectations.	D/SD 60	(12)	60	(12)	35	(6)
		U 30	(6)	25	(5)	47	(8)
		A/SA 10	(4)	15	(3)	18	(3)

Program Officer Assessment of Impact

27.	My relationship with the key school district administrators has been productive for them.	S/AN 35	(7)	25	(5)	6	(11)
		SM 35	(7)	50	(10)	6	(1)
		O/VF 30	(6)	25	(5)	88	(14)

28. I should have experienced more influence over some aspects of the project than I was able to achieve.

	Stage of Program					
	Selection		Planning		Imple- mentation	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
D/SD	33	(7)	75	(15)	33	(6)
U	24	(5)	5	(1)	44	(7)
A/SA	43	(9)	20	(4)	19	(3)

Program Officer Information Items

29. I have a good grasp of the progress being made and the problems that have arisen in all ten Rural Es Projects.

D/SD	29	(61)	21	(4)	20	(3)
U	0	(0)	53	(10)	19	(3)
A/SA	71	(15)	26	(5)	63	(10)

30. I have felt free to offer criticism and advice to local administrators even when they do not ask for it.

S/AN	57	(12)	25	(5)	12	(2)
SM	14	(3)	15	(3)	13	(2)
O/VF	28	(6)	60	(12)	75	(12)

IMPACT INDEX

Number of Specific Influence Incidents Recorded

	Stage of Program			
	Selection	Planning	Implementation	Total
I. <u>Extent of Influence</u>	N	N	N	N
A. Major perceptible influence	14	32	27	73
B. Minor perceptible influence	5	14	54	73
C. Subtle influence	3	1	47	51
D. TOTAL: Major, minor, subtle	22	47	128	197
II. <u>Aspect Influenced</u>				
A. Conceptual design	7	17	17	41
B. Operating procedures	14	27	44	85
C. Others	1	2	65	68
D. Non-Response	-	1	2	3
E. Total	22	47	128	197

APPENDIX D

A SUMMARY OF MEASURES USED

Several indices were assembled from a pool of questionnaire items answered by eight program officers (see Appendix C):

Management Role: Items 1-4; Mean Inter-item Correlation $r = .66$

Technical Assistance: Items 5-7; Mean Inter-item Correlation $r = .94$

Advice about Goals: Items 8, 9; $r = .78$

Advice about Implementation: Items 10-12; Mean Inter-item Correlation $r = .78$

Requests for Assistance: Items 13-14; Correlation $r = .85$

Local Consensus: Items 15, 16; Correlation $r = .79$

Local Competence: Items 17-18; Correlation $r = .81$